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Liberal arts tops NMC's Spring enrollment. **PAGE 2**

Blanco-Maratita is reelected to BOE post. **PAGE 3**

'No plans to remove preposition ships from NMI—for now'

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

The U.S. military does not have plans right now to remove preposition ships from Saipan because of factors within the CNMI government's control, according to the Saipan Chamber of Commerce after meeting with military officials.

The meeting followed speculations and unconfirmed reports that preposition ships are departing the Northern Marianas permanently, and that the departure is based on factors within the control of the CNMI government.

Douglas Brennan and Judge David Wiseman, co-chairs of the Chamber's Armed Forces Committee, met last week with military officials overseeing

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
Which alternative energy do you think would work best in the CNMI: geothermal, OTEC, nuclear, wind, solar, or biomass?

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to cast your vote.

119 DAYS without a government budget for FY 2009

INSIDE

Toxic Brew
The world's highest drug levels are entering India's water stream as Indian drug factories dump their residues.

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SAG Awards
Meryl Streep and Sean Penn won lead-acting honors Sunday at the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

LIFE & STYLE...Page 18

Jollibee to close in Feb.

MARK RABAGO

The Jollibee mascot welcomes customers to the Garapan branch. The store will be closed in February.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

YCO Corp. has decided not to renew its franchise agreement with Jollibee Foods Corp. and will close the last Jollibee store in the Marianas next month.

Yumul

The company's general manager, Ralph Yumul, said the island's unstable economic climate forced the family-owned business to end its relationship

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Matubis' driver's license recovered from remains

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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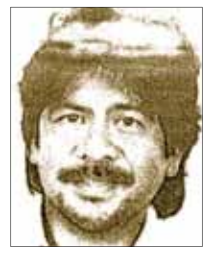
REPORTER

Crime scene investigators recovered from the remains found Saturday in Marpi a wallet containing a CNMI driver's license issued to missing Filipino surveyor, Alex M. Matubis.



Matubis

Department of Public Safety spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said yesterday that detectives are currently

See MATUBIS on Page 4

'Free rent,' extra services to lure apartment renters

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Apartment owners on Saipan have been offering "free rent," extra services like free Wi-Fi or free power and water hook up, and reduced rental rates to attract clients.

On Middle Road in Garapan, for example, an apartment building advertises "free rent" for its available units, and so is a duplex in Susupe.

"What it means is that if you

See FREE on Page 4

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

LION DANCE
Members of the Chinese Association of Saipan perform a traditional lion dance at the Hyatt Regency Saipan in Garapan as part of the Chinese New Year celebration yesterday. *See story on Page 6*

Local

Liberal arts tops NMC's Spring enrollment

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The liberal arts program of the Northern Marianas College topped the tertiary institution's enrollment figures for Spring semester.

As of yesterday, of the 821 students who registered in various academic programs and courses, 245 enrolled in the liberal arts, NMC said.

NMC's total registration figure, according to the Office of President Carmen Fernandez, excluded those registered for other classes and programs that begin later in Spring 2009.

The college is anticipating an increase with the launch of other classes, including ones that are part of NMC's Community Development Institute.

Fernandez

Coming in next with the highest enrollees is the college's bachelor's degree in elementary education with 169, while NMC's nursing program recorded 107 students for Spring semester.

For the undeclared, non-degree, and professional development programs, 83 were registered as of yesterday.

Other programs included business with 48 students, accounting with 28, business management with 36, computer applications with 24, criminal justice with 62, hospitality management with 14, and natural resource management with five.

A statement from the NMC president yesterday claimed that enrollment data for Spring semester exceeded the figure recorded in Fall semester of last year.

Fernandez said she was pleased with the enrollment data considering the challenges they faced in terms of recruiting students.

These challenges include the relocation of families away from the CNMI due to economic hardships; the college's show-cause accreditation status; economic hardships, which have compelled some students to enter the job force immediately after high school; aggressive recruitment efforts by the military, which offers immediate financial bonuses for enlistment; and transportation or child care limitations.

'PSS policy impacts NMC enrollment'

The Public School System policy requiring students to earn 28 credits before they graduate has had some impact on NMC's Spring 2009 enrollment.

Prior to the recent application of this policy four years ago, high school seniors only needed 21 credits and many of them were graduating during December of their senior year, which meant that they could start classes in January at NMC.

Fernandez also commended students for returning to NMC.

"We are certainly glad to see many students return from last Fall, and are happy that we have many new students taking classes at NMC for the first time," said Fernandez.

She said the college provides many personal and professional opportunities for everyone, and will continue to drive that message as it gears for recruitment for the upcoming Summer and Fall semesters.

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Judge orders Fund to pay disability claim of retiree

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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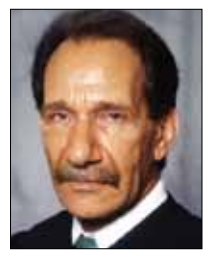
REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman yesterday ordered the NMI Retirement Fund to grant interim disability payments to a retiree who has a claim for disability.

Wiseman ordered the Fund's board of trustees and administrator Mark A. Aguon Aguon to immediately pay Jesus A. Arriola interim disability payments, as ordered by the Fund's hearing officer on Nov. 1, 2008.

"[Arriola] has lived without income since June of 2007. Continuing to delay compliance of the hearing officer's order to make interim payments merely because an appeal was filed is unacceptable," said the judge in granting Arriola's petition.


Wiseman

Wiseman noted that if an unsatisfied party is allowed to disregard the decision of the hearing officer merely because they intend to appeal, the orders of the hearing officer will be nullified.

"This court cannot allow a party to treat the order of the hearing officer as mere suggestions pending a second opinion, rather than an order that must be complied with," he said.

Permitting Aguon to ignore the hearing officer's decision without asking for a stay of the order creates an indefinite stalling of every decision of the hearing officer.

Wiseman said he shall maintain jurisdiction over all matters in this lawsuit and that, pending the outcome of the appeal, he will revisit Arriola's petition for a writ and issue an order accordingly.

Last December, Arriola, through counsel Jeanne H. Rayphand, filed a new petition in the Superior Court to compel Aguon to immediately pay him his disability retirement benefits.

Arriola asked the court to order Aguon to pay him the sum of 66 2/3 percent of the salary he was receiving at the time of his disability and separation from service of the government.

"Commonwealth law requires that retirement and disability payments commence on the very next pay day following the retirement or disability so that government employees who are members of the Retirement Fund do not have a break in income and so they and their families do not suffer from loss of income whenever the administrative processes are delayed," said Rayphand of the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc.,

Arriola previously filed the same petition for a writ of mandamus but Wiseman denied the request in September 2008.

Wiseman ruled that Arriola has been unable to obtain certification of his disability from a vocational rehabilitation counselor. Wiseman said the petitioner has also failed to establish that he has a clear right to the relief sought.

Wiseman, however, urged the Fund to act with all due urgency to approve or disapprove Arriola's disability application without further delay.

After Wiseman's denial of the petition, the Fund hearing officer entered on Nov. 1, 2008, an order granting interim disability payments to Arriola, Rayphand said.

The Fund appealed the hearing officer's decision to its board of trustees and the board set a hearing on the appeal for Jan. 13, 2009.

Rayphand said that on Nov. 7, 2008, Public Law 16-19 was signed into law, eliminating the requirement by a vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Arriola asked the court to instruct Aguon to pay interim semimonthly disability payments to him until the board of trustees has determined whether he is entitled to disability pension.

Wiseman heard Arriola's second petition last Thursday. Attorney James E. Hollman appeared on behalf of Aguon.

In his order, Wiseman ruled that the hearing officer's order was unequivocal—that Arriola is entitled to immediate interim disability benefits.

Blanco-Maratita is reelected to BOE post

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

By acclamation, members voted to give Lucy Blanco-Maratita another term in the chairmanship of the State Board of Education during last week's selection of officers.

Blanco-Maratita, who is serving the fourth year of her first term as education board member from Tinian, said she is elated by her colleagues' trust and vote of confidence.

"I am grateful for the confidence that my fellow board members have given me. It is a responsibility that I take to heart because I truly believe that education must be the priority for everyone if we are to pull ourselves by our bootstraps," she told *Saipan Tribune*.

She cited local and federal funds, student performances, technology infrastructure, and career technical education as the biggest challenges for the board and PSS leadership.

"We will need to keep tabs on spending to ensure that we have the funds to maintain our programs and continue to maintain student achievement," she said, citing the important role of the financial master plan being developed for school operations.

Blanco-Maratita said there's a need to know where to begin the lobbying efforts to get the support needed by the schools.

She disclosed that changes in the U.S. administration and key players in the U.S. Department of Education had affected the consolidated grants being received by CNMI-PSS.

She vowed to work closely with the CNMI's delegate to the U.S. Congress, Gregorio Sablan, to improve the Commonwealth's access to different grants and its inclusion in the President's stimulus package.

She said the board will also be reviewing the priorities it set for Education Commissioner Dr. Rita Sablan when she first came on board in August.

"There are initiatives that the commissioner has set in motion, including improving our human resources capacity [through recruitment, retention, and renewal], and involvement of students and parents. We will look for ways to support these initiatives to put Students First," she said, adding they will also keep tab on the progress of achieving the PSS strategic priorities.

"By knowing where our shortcomings are, we'll have a better idea of what further support needs to be extended to our schools to improve student achievement, be it in funding or human resources allocation," she said.

Technology infrastructure is also among the board's primary focus this year.

Smaller schools may not have the same access to courses being offered at larger high schools.

She said there is also a need to find funds to replace previous vocational education grants, and improve collaboration with Northern Marianas College and employment/job skills training related agencies, and the private sectors.

"There is an urgent need to prepare our students for career and college, especially in light of the effect that federalization of immigration will have on our ability to ensure that our business have the workforce they need," she concluded.

Also re-installed to their positions were vice chair Herman T. Guerrero and board secretary/treasurer Marylou S. Ada.

Guerrero, a former BOE chair, is serving his second term on board while Ada is in the second year of her first term.

The following members were designated chairpersons of various committees: Guerrero, fiscal and personnel affairs committee; Tanya King, curriculum instruction and assessment; Marylou Ada, capital improvement project; Galvin Deleon Guerrero, school reforms committee and special education and early childhood; and Blanco-Maratita, who remains chairwoman of the legislative initiative committee of the board.

CUC sees $200K overrecovery in LEAC's 1st month

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. is projecting an overrecovery of approximately $200,000 for the first month since implementing the levelized energy adjustment clause, LEAC.

In December, the Public Utilities Commission adopted the LEAC for CUC, which sets the utility rates for six months, although the first LEAC was set for three months. The adjustment clause replaced the electric fuel rate that fluctuated monthly. The current LEAC is 23 cents per kilowatt-hour. Under the LEAC the projected fuel costs per gallon was $1.66 for January for Saipan; $2.08 for Tinian; and $2.17 for Rota. But CUC paid about 10 cents less per gallon, according to CUC executive director Antonio Muña.

But, Muña said, it's important to remember that the utility agency will not see final customer payments right away.

"Bear in mind [that] when we start actually collecting for the January fuel costs, it won't be until March" because of lag time, Muña said, adding that it's nice to know there is a cushion between the price of fuel and the projected revenue.

Under PUC's rules, if overrecovery or underrecovery reaches $350,000 or more, PUC may approve a change in the LEAC price before the end of the six-month period.

"This is the nature of LEAC," the director said. "On one month you could be under. Another month you could be over. That's why this process is revisited. Instead of changing rates every month, it gives everyone a plan for a budget."

Muña said that in case of an overrecovery a change in the LEAC would probably not occur until close to the end of the six-month period.

January's surplus will cover any underrecovery realized in February, Muña said. CUC estimates that the price of fuel for February will exceed the LEAC's projections per gallon.

Any additional money earned each month is distributed among four accounts. One account is used for fuel and other costs related to the fuel supplier; another for building a reserve in order to have a 30-day supply of oil; another is to fund PUC regulatory fees; and the last account is to fund a reserve for power generation measures.

2 Saipan groups to build four classrooms in the Philippines

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Two Filipino groups on Saipan have raised $16,000 to build four new classrooms in the Philippines to help address the classroom shortage in the country.

This brings to 15 the total number of classrooms sponsored and built by the Filipino community and other entities in the CNMI under the Philippine government project "Classrooms from Workers Abroad."

In elementary and secondary public schools with critical shortage of classrooms in the Philippines, students hold classes in makeshift classrooms, on stairways, grass lawns and even under the trees. They also have to share one room with up to 200 other students.

Wilfredo DL. Maximo, Philippine Consul General in the CNMI, received yesterday the donations from the Saipan Simbang Gabi Group led by chair Rene Atienza and Filipino Community Foundation CNMI led by its president, Maribel Loste.

"We are truly appreciative of the generous gestures of the Filipino Community Foundation and the Saipan Simbang Gabi Group. These donations are worthy investments for the future of our children in the Philippines because this will mean better classrooms that would provide them with a more conducive learning environment," Maximo told *Saipan Tribune*.

Nine of the 15 new classrooms are already built, while the construction of two classrooms will soon be completed. The four other classrooms funded by the two Saipan groups will be built within the year.

The Filipino Community Foundation will be building two rooms at Sara National High School in Sara, Iloilo.

The Saipan Simbang Gabi Group will be building two rooms in Misamis Oriental, in addition to one it built earlier at Lalawigan Elementary School in Borongan, Eastern Samar. Another classroom construction it funded, located at Labnig Elementary School in Malinao, Albay, will soon be completed.

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Sentencing of ex-CUC chief Guerrero postponed

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The federal court has postponed the Feb. 27, 2009, sentencing of former Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Anthony C. Guerrero.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Alex R. Munson on Friday ordered that Guerrero's Feb. 27 sentencing be taken off-calendar. He said the sentencing will be rescheduled at a later date.

The judge ordered the delay of the sentencing after Guerrero's counsel, Robert T. Torres, and the prosecutor, Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric O'Malley, requested to reset the sentencing hearing.

Torres and O'Malley agreed that because the jury trial for Guerrero's co-defendants—former Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Villagomez, James Santos, and Joaquina Santos—has been rescheduled to March 30, 2009, postponing the sentencing hearing until after the conclusion of that trial would be appropriate.

Munson approved the agreement of the parties to put off the sentencing.

Villagomez, the Santos couple, and Guerrero were accused of engaging in a scheme to bilk the CNMI government out of thousands of dollars with a series of needless chemical purchases.

The U.S. government has filed new charges against Villagomez and the Santos couple, adding bribery to the three charges already being faced by the three.

Villagomez and the Santos couple pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Guerrero, however, entered a plea deal last Aug. 11 with the U.S. government. He pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy, an offense that may cost him up to five years in prison or probation.

CHC employees hope housing allowance won't be taken away

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

A proposal to discontinue the monthly housing allowance of Commonwealth Health Center employees due to declining government revenues has been worrying personnel at the hospital.

"It's only been a proposal. There's no action on it yet, but we hope the proposal won't be implemented because it's a big concern to us," said Joey Camero, a member of the CNMI Nursing Association and head nurse in the emergency room of CHC.

CHC personnel hired from outside the CNMI are given monthly housing allowances of $600 and $800, depending on whether the employee has his family with him.

"We understand that we are in a tough situation right now but we hope they won't take away the monthly housing allowance because it's been a big help to us nurses and others, too," said Camero.

Nurses in the CNMI are paid much less than their counterpart in the U.S. mainland. Registered nurses here have an average wage of $16.03 to $14 an hour, while those in the U.S. earn $20 and up, said Camero. Licensed practical nurses here get paid an average of $11.95 an hour, which is far below the average in the states.

Starting today, Health Secretary Joseph Kevin Villagomez will be meeting with non-U.S. citizen employees at the Department of Public Health to discuss concerns about the impact on their jobs of the federalization of CNMI immigration by June. Camero said the housing allowance issue might also be discussed.

FREE

From Page 1

sign a one-year contract, you won't have to pay rent for two months. If you pay on the first month, you will not pay on the second month, and again, on the fourth month," said Ann Cansado of Life Care Center which manages the Oden Building on Middle Road across the road from Mobil station.

Cansado said their "free rent" offer has been effective, with only a few units now vacant.

"The rental rate has been the same for years but we got a lot of tenants because we offer free rent," she added.

Mustafa Shakir of Shakir's Realty said the extra services—from flexible payment of security deposit to free power and water hook up—make a big difference in attracting prospective apartment tenants.

"Small things do count," he said, adding that these extra services result in 95 percent occupancy rate at his apartment buildings. Shakir's Realty has 24 apartment buildings on Saipan.

Depending on the location, a one-bedroom apartment costs $200 to $300.

Many apartment buildings on the island have a number of vacant units, some of them previously occupied by garment workers who have gone back home or those who moved to cheaper apartments. People can now rent a house for as low as $50, as advertised by the owner of a house in Kagman.

HAIDEE EUGENIO
This apartment on Middle Road offers "free rent" to attract clients.

Other apartment owners offer free Wi-Fi service, 24-hour water, night security, free trash collection and backup generator to fill up their vacant units.

"I will say many apartment buildings right now have an average of 60 percent occupancy," Shakir said.

He, however, said that in the next three months or so, demand for three- to four-bedroom executive homes will surge as federal government employees start arriving on Saipan in connection with the federal takeover of CNMI immigration come June.

MATUBIS

From Page 1

working on obtaining Matubis' dental records to positively link the remains to him.

Ogumoro said the remains, mostly just the skeleton, were found in a secluded farm owned by a certain Camacho. The farm is about a 10-minute drive west of Kalabera Cave, where investigators found Matubis' abandoned vehicle last Aug. 19.

DPS Commissioner Santiago F. Tudela told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that, although investigation is still ongoing, their initial analysis seems to show that the victim committed suicide by hanging himself on a cow fence.

Ogumoro said that on Saturday at 11:18am two male farmers reported to DPS that they had found human remains at their farm lot.

Ogumoro said a preliminary investigation showed that one of the farmers was searching for their cows when he discovered a pair of boots and a backpack in the jungle area northeast of the farm grounds.

The farmer then discovered the human remains. He also saw personal belongings near the remains. Police were then immediately called.

Crime scene investigators located a wallet within the deceased's possession and found Matubis' CNMI driver's license.

Since detectives do not have positive identification on the remains, Ogumoro said they are working on getting Matubis' dental records to match it with the victim's dentures.

"Detectives are further investigating this case," Ogumoro said, adding that detectives are still trying to determine the cause of death.

It is not clear yet whether the Attorney General's Office will agree to an autopsy on the remains.

The DPS spokesperson said that, when found, the remains still had on a light blue inner shirt, camouflage rain jacket, and fatigue pants.

Ogumoro said the case is classified as a dead person and not as a homicide.

The 47-year-old Matubis has been reported missing since July 30 last year. On Aug. 8 or 11 days after the story of his mysterious disappearance appeared in newspapers, DPS received a call that the surveyor was sighted in the Marpi area.

When police responded to the area, they discovered on the same day Matubis' Toyota pickup abandoned near Kalabera Cave. The truck's hood was still hot when investigators found the vehicle.

Last July 28, Matubis went to Tinian to do some project. The following day, he went back to Saipan. That day, he sent a large amount of money to his wife in the Philippines. He did not return to his barracks, prompting his employer to report to DPS his disappearance.

Malou Matubis, wife of Alex Matubis, earlier told *Saipan Tribune* when she came on Saipan a couple of months ago that they don't have a problem because "he is a very religious and supportive of the family."

JOLLIBEE

From Page 1

with the Philippines' largest food company.

"This past year we just saw the [sales] trend going down. Initially, we were juggling with the decision whether to renew the franchise or not and go for another year, knowing some months will incur losses," he said. "We wanted to continue operating Jollibee in hopes of a rebound in the economy, but after witnessing the world economy collapse, the high cost of doing business, coupled with the closure of all garment companies and some local establishment on Saipan, the family decided to cut its losses and conserve the resources we have for the near future."

Yumul said the company's decision to close Jollibee Garapan took a lot of factors into consideration.

"We reviewed the sales this past year. The indicators and reports of increased costs of doing business here in the CNMI, uncertainty in the economy both locally and federally, and the repatriation of guest workers in the CNMI is now on the rise, and is no longer viable to operate [Jollibee]," he said.

August 2009 would've marked the 10-year anniversary of YCO's franchise agreement with Jollibee Philippines.

"We're not really making money anymore. We've been struggling about the decision to close it since January 2008. However, due to our desire to prove a gathering place for the Filipinos, especially the kids, we decided to continue the operations. Last November, we finally decided to shut down in February. We didn't announce it immediately because we didn't want to lower the morale of our employees."

Yumul added that the rise of cheaper dining alternatives on Saipan also affected the local Jollibee store's sales.

The fastfood chain used to have three outlets in the Marianas—two on Saipan and one in Guam. Guam closed a couple years ago, while Jollibee Chalan Kanoa shut down in July 2004.

Yumul said he is sad to see Jollibee buzz away toward the sunset.

"We had a good franchise. YCO Corp. prides itself in our business relationships. If we agree on a venture we will hold our end of the deal and not drop it in the middle of the game. We've been involved with it for so long and it's hard to let go but this business cycle has come full circle," he said.

Asked what YCO Corp. plans for the site soon to be orphaned by Jollibee, Yumul only said, "As for the future, we will leave our options open."

NO PLANS

From Page 1

preposition ships frequently anchored off the western coast of Saipan.

"It was explained to us that there are no plans right now to remove the preposition ships from Saipan because of any perceived government slight," the committee said yesterday in response to a *Saipan Tribune* inquiry.

The Chamber committee, however, said they were reminded that the ships are not homeported on Saipan but are forward-deployed anywhere in the Western Pacific region and can be underway to anywhere in the world on 12- to 24-hours notice.

Factors that contribute to determining where those ships are located when they are not underway include a regular stateside maintenance cycle, decommissioning, rebalancing of squadrons around the world, and cost avoidance.

"We were reminded during our meeting that, although the ships anchored off the coast of Saipan continue to enjoy close relationships with the Commonwealth and Guam, a preposition squadron is operated similar to a business and takes into consideration flexibility, security, logistics, and fiscal efficiency," the committee said.

The CNMI is in competition with a number of other ports. The Chamber said the government and companies doing business with these ships need to understand that although options may be limited on Saipan, options are not limited in the very large Pacific region, and the squadron, like any business, will seek out places that offer the most convenient logistical options at the lowest cost.

"While we do not expect in the near future to experience the departure of all preposition ships on a permanent basis, we may see a decreased presence because of factors such as decommissioning and rebalancing, which are outside of our control," the Chamber said.

The business group asked officials responsible for the preposition ships to alert the Chamber in the event that factors within the control of the CNMI government or business community become considerations in any determination to decrease the presence of the ships off the Commonwealth's shores.

Military spending in the CNMI benefits the local economy. Members of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, for example, offer discounts to military personnel who choose the islands as their liberty destination.

Consultant urges 'flexibility' for PSS on budget

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

With the limited budget proposed for public schools, "flexibility" is one important consideration that would keep public education afloat in the Commonwealth, according to a financial consultant of the Public School System.

In a presentation to Education Board members, Ed Tenorio detailed the budget figures from both the continuing resolution and the proposed new appropriation for PSS and emphasized the need to authorize the system to move around funds to sustain the schools' operations.

Under the continuing budget resolution, PSS' funding level is at $33.2 million. This represents a 5.5-percent reduction of $1.9 million from the beginning fiscal year funding level of $35.085 million.

The reduction was triggered by the governor's communication to the Legislature reducing the available general fund resources by 5.5 percent, or $8.6 million—reflecting a decrease from $156.7 million to $148 million.

A breakdown of PSS' budget based on this continuing appropriation allots $30.9 million for personnel; $2.1 million for "all others"; and an additional $112,067 as its share in the Washington Representative Office's budget that was redistributed by the Legislature as a result of eliminating the office.

Tenorio, in collaboration with the system's finance and budget office, has reviewed the current expenditure trend and made projections through the end of current fiscal year: anticipated personnel cost is $29 million; estimated "all others" is $1.8 million; and utilities is $3.4 million.

Though PSS faces a $1.1 million shortfall—$33.2 million budget under the 5.5 percent reduction versus $34.2 million in projected expenditures—the transfer of $2 million Compact impact funds to PSS will bring a surplus of $986,523.

However, Tenorio noted that this calculation was based on a "very conservative, very tight" formula that will stop PSS from hiring additional teachers and anticipates "serious" concerns on its operation.

"This is almost the actual figures…" he told the board, expressing hope the administration will make good on its promise to give Compact impact funds to schools.

Based on House Bill 16-213—the Appropriation Act for FY 2009—PSS funding level is $34.6 million. The Legislature has embedded into PSS' budget the anticipated transfer of $2 million from Compact Impact funds.

Also, PSS is exempted from remitting to the Office of Public Auditor 1 percent of its total appropriation; the savings will be used to buy schoolbooks.

The following is a summary of estimated total expenditures based on expenditure trend and projected expenses through end of FY 2009: anticipated personnel cost is $29 million; estimated "all others" is $1.8 million; and estimated utilities is $3.4 million.

PSS, based on this budget proposal, is anticipating a total net of $307,015.

However, PSS' outstanding debt of $1.1 million to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. remains "unbudgeted."

"I asked the Legislature to let PSS move the money around because it's the key to the operation," Tenorio told the board, adding that the Planning and Budgeting Act also allows "exemptions" that may be provided public schools.

Kilili wants PSS, US lawmakers to discuss education challenges

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

CNMI Rep. Gregorio "Kilili" Sablan wants lawmakers in Washington D.C. to get a better understanding of the challenges facing the Public School System in the CNMI.

Sablan, who was recently named to the House Education Committee, said he is arranging meetings between the members of the committee and PSS officials.

"I think that PSS know best how we can all work together to improve the education of our children so I am making arrangements for these meetings here in Washington," he said in an e-mail.

Sablan has been selected to take part in the Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee, where he will focus on reworking the No Child Left Behind Act this year.

The law requires all states and territories to develop assessments in basic skills of all students in certain grades, if those areas are to achieve federal funding.

Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the Education Committee, has said that the Act needs significant improvements and, Sablan said, he looks forward to working with Miller, the committee and the Obama administration to make the law fairer and more flexible for the CNMI. He added that he also wants the Northern Marianas to be better funded under the NCLB.

Under the Act, all teachers must be designated as highly qualified by 2010. Besides holding a bachelor's degree and meeting state certification requirements, teachers must pass a state-approved teacher test. The PSS Board of Education adopted the PRAXIS I and II tests. The board also decided that teachers who do not pass the PRAXIS exams will get a reduction in pay to a first year teacher's salary, regardless of the years they have worked within the school system—a move that has upset many teachers in the system. One of the arguments among the Association of Commonwealth Teachers is that test scores set by the BOE were in comparison to U.S. states, while many of the teachers within the school system speak English as a second language and did not attend U.S.-based education institutions. Some of the information on the tests are based on information that is learned in elementary or high school, the group said.

Such issues related to the Act need to be discussed in person, Sablan said.

"I think it would be very important at this time for a PSS official to come to Washington for face-to-face meetings with committee staff so that there is a clear understanding of specific issues facing educators in the Northern Mariana Islands," he said.

In January, Education Commissioner Rita A. Sablan, BOE chair Lucy Blanco-Maratita, BOE member Marylou Ada and PSS federal programs officer Tim Thornburgh traveled to D.C. to meet with U.S. Department of Education officials to discuss federal funding for the CNMI and other insular areas.

2 men rescued from stranded boat

The Department of Public Safety's Boating Safety Section rescued two men from a stranded fishing boat west of Charlie Dock Saturday night and cited the captain for lacking a boat registration.

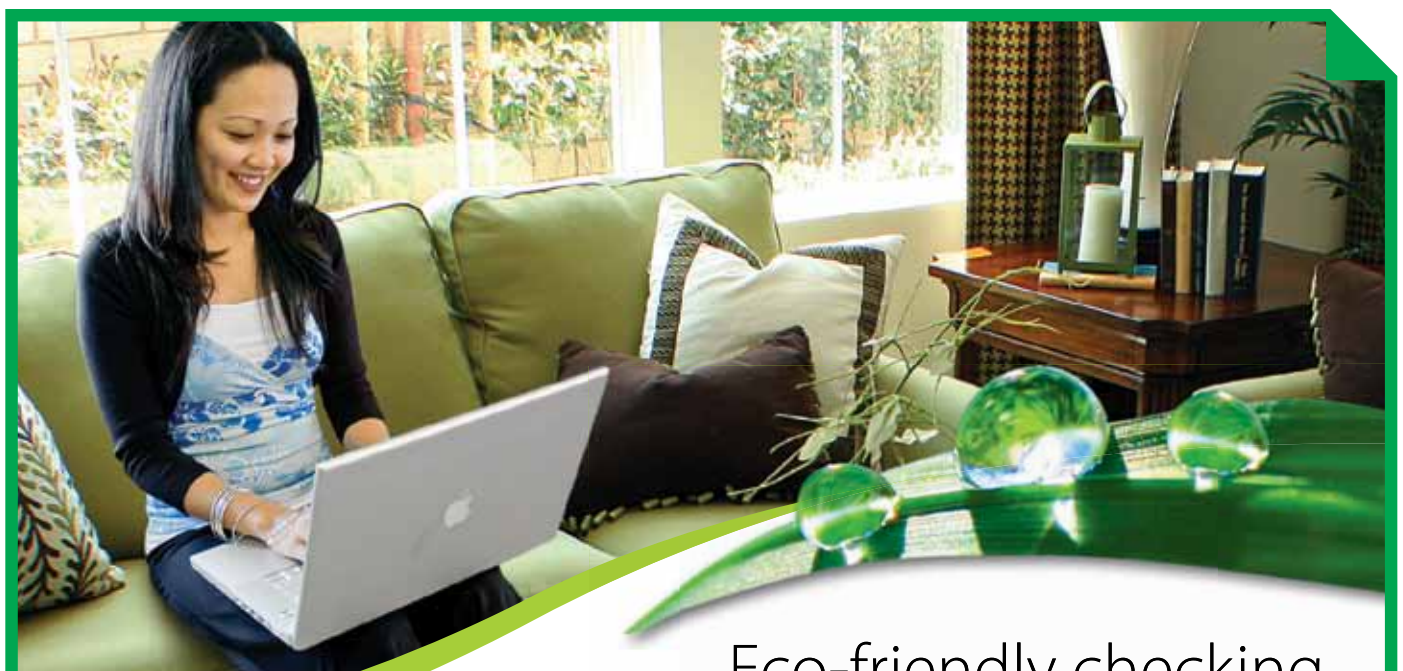
DPS spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said yesterday that Bernard C. Taitano, 37, and Christopher T. Camacho, 24, appeared to be in good condition.

Ogumoro said BSS officers inspected the 15-foot open motorboat and found that all safety equipment were on board.

However, there was no boat registration so the officers issued a citation to Taitano for violating CNMI Boating Safety laws.

DPS received a call of a distressed vessel west of Charlie Dock on Saturday at 6:44pm.

Investigation showed that Taitano and Camacho left Saipan to do bottom fishing. As they were about to head back, the two started experiencing difficulties in starting the boat's engine. The two then called police's assistance. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***



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Island community celebrates Lunar New Year

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Guests of various nationalities, public school children, and spectators from villages joined the island's Chinese community in the observance of the Lunar New Year yesterday.

Highlighted by the traditional lion dance and fireworks display, the Chinese Association of Saipan wowed the crowd as its members performed the popular lion dance in selected establishments around Saipan.

The group kicked off the celebration at 9am by visiting places most frequented by Chinese nationals such as hotels, businesses, and restaurants.

Its first stop was the TSL Plaza where a large group of viewers gathered and waited for their arrival.

Association director Rose Chan-Matsuda was elated at the turnout, saying she never expected to see bigger crowds in their early morning show.

She believes that "everyone is embracing our celebration as their own."

Through the lion dance, the association hopes to bring good luck and better economy to the CNMI.

In the Chinese culture, the symbolic performance drives away bad spirits and brings fortune to everyone.

At 10am, Matsuda's group was seen at Saipan Grand Hotel "bringing fortune" to its guests and employees.

At Hyatt Regency Saipan, students from Garapan Elementary School were seen enjoying the Chinese demonstration.

According to GES third grade teacher Pamela Thorpe, nearly 40 students from third and fifth grade were present to witness the event.

The teacher said she brings her students to the performances when the occasion falls on school days.

"We're studying China for three days now…and to better understand the uniqueness of this culture, we bring them here and [allow them to] witness for themselves the show, which is an important part of the Chinese New Year celebration," the teacher told *Saipan Tribune*.

The CNMI is home to a significant number of Chinese nationals: students, workers, and investors.

Thorpe said, "There are so many Chinese people on our island…and we want our kids to understand who they are."

Eight-year-old Michelle Galang said she enjoyed watching the lion dance for the first time. "It's fun…and very colorful. I enjoyed it," she said.

For her part, third grade student Rudy Dela Cruz was amazed at the fireworks display at the Hyatt Regency's lobby.

The "lion" also performed yesterday in the following venues: Palms Resort Saipan, Subway Gualo Rai and Transpac Business Center, Fiesta Resort & Spa, and Duty Free Shoppers Galleria.

Today, the group is scheduled to fly to Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino.

The lion dance performances capped a celebration that actually began the day before, when the Chinese community met the new lunar year with an extravagant fireworks display at the Paseo de Marianas. The display lasted some 30 minutes and drew a large crowd of late night tourists who were lured to the deafening display.

NMI awarded $129K emergency food and shelter program funds

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands has been selected to receive $129,675 under Phase 27 to supplement emergency food and shelter programs in the Commonwealth.

The award for the CNMI is based upon the total number of unemployed individuals the progran's jurisdiction.

The selection was made by the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program that is chaired by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and consists of representatives from the Salvation Army; American Red Cross; United Jewish Communities; Catholic Charities, USA; National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A; and United Way of America.

A local board made up of the Mayor of Saipan, Karidat, American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the DCCA Division of Youth Services, Veteran's Affairs Office, and others will determine how the funds appropriated by the U.S. Congress to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are to be distributed among local emergency food and shelter programs.

Under the terms of the grant from the National Board, local, agencies chosen to receive funds must: 1) be private voluntary non-profits or unit of government, 2) have an accounting system, 3) practice nondiscrimination, 4) have demonstrated the capability to deliver emergency food and/or shelter programs, and 5) if they are a private voluntary organization, they must have a voluntary board. Qualifying agencies are urged to apply.

Additional information regarding the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program can be found on the EFSP web site http://www.efsp.unitedway.org. Public or private voluntary agencies interested in applying for Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds may contact Ms. Lauri B. Ogumoro, Intern Phase 27 Local Board Chair, at 234-6981 or at the main office of Karidat in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan. The deadline for applications is Monday, Feb. 16, 2009. ***(PR)***

CUC petitions for CDA stock transaction

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has petitioned the Public Utilities Commission to convert $29 million in CUC preferred stock to the Commonwealth Development Authority, in order to reach a resolution to a longstanding debt.

CUC and CDA have been at odds over a $45.5 million loan for several years. Because of CUC's debt the agency is unable to borrow money. The debt also impedes any chance of privatization, according to CUC.

"No business would buy CUC for a reasonable price as long as the liability appears on CUC's books," the lawyer for CUC wrote in the petition.

Also, according to the petition, CUC rate holders would have to shoulder a rate increase, around $5 million a year, if the utility agency was to repay at market rates. .

For those reasons, CUC is asking that the $45.5 million be converted to stock, with CDA waiving $16 million of it, for a total transaction of $29.4 million. Under CUC's proposal, all accrued interest would be waived in return for settling the government's utility bills. Dividend payments would be 2 percent annually and deferred for the first three years with the amount amortized over 15 years without interest.

PUC, if it agrees to the petition, will hold hearings on the matter in March.

CUC and CDA have been negotiating settlement agreements for some time.

"CDA, I think has a position with respect to conversion from loan to equity, equity being a preferred stock ownership position that may be above and beyond what would normally be afforded preferred stock holders. It's an issue of negotiation, and it's not unexpected considering CDA's position," said CUC executive director Antonio Muña.

They're trying to protect their interest, he added.

But, Muña said, once an agreement on converting to equity is agreed upon it will be a positive step.

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING SERVICES
RFQ09-GOV-035

Central Garapan Waterline Replacement

Governor Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Governor Timothy P. Villagomez, through the CNMI Water Task Force, are soliciting statements of qualification (SOQ) from licensed architectural and engineering firms (A&E) for the Design of the Central Garapan Waterline Replacement Project, Garapan, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

The full Request for Qualifications (RFQ) documents may be obtained by contacting Pedro Sasamoto, WTF Program Manager, by telephone at (670) 664-2274 or by email at psas@saipan.com. All questions concerning this proposal shall be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 pm, January 27, 2009 to Mr. Sasamoto by facsimile at (670) 664-2279.

The design and construction of the Central Garapan Waterline Replacement Project is made possible by a grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce. All element of the construction process shall meet standards of the EDA. The EDA grant is matched by a grant from the Office of the Insular Affairs (OIA), U.S. Department of the Interior and requires a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance.

One original and four (4) copies shall be submitted to the Office of the Director, Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, MP 96950 no later than **2:00 PM, (CNMI local time), on February 13, 2009**.

The SOQ shall be marked **"Central Garapan Waterline Replacement Project, RFQ09-GOV-035"**. For firms within the CNMI, one (1) original and four (4) copies of SOQ must be submitted to the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, no later than **2:00 p.m. (CNMI local time), on February13, 2009**. Firms located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their proposal by submitting a **Notice of Intent to Propose**. Notices of Intent to Propose must be received by the Director of Procurement & Supply no later than **2:00 p.m. (CNMI local time), on February 13, 2009**, and may be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515 or email procurement@pticom.com. For firms located outside the CNMI, one original and four (4) copies of SOQ must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **February 13, 2009** AND must be received no later than **February 25, 2009**. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a proposal.

The CNMI reserves the right to reject any and all SOQ and to waive any imperfections in any SOQ if to do so shall be in the best interests of the CNMI. All SOQ shall become the exclusive property of the CNMI government.

Timothy P. Villagomez
Lt. Governor

Herman S. Sablan
Director, Procurement & Supply

HAPPY 1ST BIRTHDAY
Happy birthday to Heleyna Frielle dela Santa, shown here with Mommy Hazel and Daddy Derick. "Our cute little darling is celebrating her first birthday today, Jan. 27, 2009. May our good Lord continue to shower you and your family more blessings." Love, ninongs and ninangs.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy birthday Rommel Catalma. Greetings come from your wife Neth and your friends. The birthday celebrant is joined in this picture by his wife Neth.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delta Management Corp.–Saipan presents a $1,500 check to Karidat, represented here by Ned Arriola, leftmost. Others in photo are, from left, DMC co-owner Mike Borja, Karidat's Judy Pangelinan, DMC Saipan operations manager Shirley Santos, DMC co-owner Jim Arenovski, and DMC director Jill Arenovski.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Shirley Santos, Delta Management Corp.–Saipan operations manager, third from left, presents a $1,500 check to NMI Crime Stoppers coordinator Jason Tarkong, leftmost, and Crime Stoppers treasurer James Matsumoto, second from left. Others in photo are, from left, DMC co-owner Mike Borja, DMC co-owner Jim Arenovski, and DMC director Jill Arenovski.

Delta Management Saipan celebrates 10 years in NMI

Delta Management Corp.–Saipan and its owners, Jim Arenovski and Michael Borja, celebrated 10 years on Saipan by giving out presents to two organizations.

The operators of the Shell Susupe, Shell Gualo Rai and Shell San Roque and authorized distributors of IT&E prepaid products presented Karidat and NMI Crime Stoppers with checks worth $1,500 each to help their cause.

Committed to hiring a 100-percent local workforce right from the start, Arenovski and Borja heard their share of detractors. "We got a lot of the normal concerns from many in the business sector on Saipan about hiring locals and we just knew from our experiences in Guam that it takes good hiring and great training to make a superior product and we just put that to work and have been successful ever since….Just stop by one of our stations and you be the judge."

Delta also recognized Shirley Mendiola Santos, who started as a cashier 10 years ago and is now the group's Saipan Operations Manager. "Shirley's dedication and commitment has made our Saipan operation a 'well oiled machine.' The time and training invested in Shirley has paid off in so many ways, we are grateful to have her as a leader in our organization."

When presenting the checks, Arenovski and Borja thanked Karidat and NMI Crime Stoppers for the important roles they play in the CNMI and asked for the community to do their best to support these two organizations.

Borja, recently nominated for Executive of the Year in Guam and former Guam Crime Stoppers chairman, expressed that it is "an honor to give back to a community that has supported us this past decade."

Looking forward, Arenovski indicated that his company is dedicated to the CNMI and looks forward to another 10 years doing business here. "There has not been any doubt that this is my family's home and I will work to ensure it remain our home well into the future by making sure our businesses remain viable and profitable in these changing times."

Borja added, "Delta has not only donated money back to this community but as many of you know, Jim has a long history of giving back to the CNMI with his time, serving his second term as Chamber of Commerce president and going on eight years with the NMI Crime Stoppers Program."

Arenovski said, "I could not do the work I do in the community without the dedicated staff we have here on Saipan. Thanks to them, I am able to serve the community."

Delta Management Corp. in Guam operates four Shell Service Stations and is the authorized distributor for IT&E prepaid products. ***(PR)***

Caution urged for small vessels

Small vessels are being urged to be cautious, especially when entering or leaving harbors, due to rough seas that are expected to last until at least Friday.

In a small craft advisory issued late yesterday afternoon, the CNMI Emergency Management Office said that a weak trade-wind disturbance will bring scattered showers to the region overnight and combined seas of 10 feet or more are expected.

The advisory remains in effect from 6pm last night until 6am Saturday.

"A trade-wind surge is expected to produce winds of 20 to 25 knots and combined seas of 10 feet or more tonight through Tuesday night. Winds should decrease to 15 to 20 knots by Wednesday but seas will remain near 10 feet through at least Friday night," EMO said, citing information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan Guam.

EMO is advising the public, especially beachgoers, fishermen, tourists, swimmers, divers, and surfers, to exercise caution along exposed reefs and beaches.

Last night, east winds of 20 to 25 knots were expected. Wind waves were projected at 7 to 9 feet, while mixed swells in the east are at 5 ft and northwest, 4 ft. Today, east wind is at 20 knots. Wind waves will be 6 to 8 ft. Mixed swell east 5 ft and northwest 4 ft. Tonight, east wind is at 20 to 25 knots. Wind waves 7 to 9 ft. Mixed swell east 5 ft and northwest 3 ft.

Tomorrow, east winds are projected at 15 to 20 knots. Wind waves will be 6 to 8 ft, while an east swell will be 6 ft. On Wednesday night and Thursday, east wind will be 15 to 20 knots. Wind waves will be 6 to 8 ft, while an east swell will be 7 to 8 ft. On Friday, east wind is at 15 to 20 knots. Wind waves will be 6 to 8 ft, while an east swell will be 6 ft and north 3 ft. On Saturday, east wind is at 10 to 20 knots. Wind waves 4 to 6 ft. East swell 6 ft and north 4 ft. ***(EMO)***

FHB partners with Orbitz Travel

HAGÅTÑA, Guam—First Hawaiian Bank announced Friday a new partnership with Orbitz that enhances its Priority Rewards card program, providing greater value and easier CashPoint redemption for all its 100,000+ credit and debit card customers.

"As the largest local card issuer in Hawaii, First Hawaiian is pleased to offer our Priority Rewards card customers increased value and services. The partnership with Orbitz will guarantee the lowest travel costs, and the 1 percent cash back rewards option means our customers could pay only 99 cents for every dollar of card purchases—good news in difficult economic times," said Curt Otaguro, First Hawaiian Bank senior vice president, Card Services Division.

New features include:

■ Air travel reward redemption through Orbitz, both online and a dedicated call center;

■ Up to 1 percent cash back reward on purchases;

■ A feature for cardholders to consolidate Priority Rewards CashPoints for faster redemptions;

■ Extended live customer service redemption center hours and a new Priority Rewards Program website;

■ The ability to "gift" or transfer CashPoints to other card members.

Customers will be able to redeem CashPoints for travel anytime, anywhere on any airline with no black out dates using the Orbitz travel search engine to quickly locate the lowest published airfares. Businesses can consolidate CashPoints at the company level and consumers can now link all of their Priority Rewards credit and debit accounts together including family members, making it faster to accumulate CashPoints. CashPoints may also be transferred or gifted to another Priority Rewards card member. And cardholders also have the option of getting up to 1 percent cash back on purchases. The bank offers both a personal credit card and a business credit card with the customer's photo on the reverse side to help prevent fraudulent use. For more information visit www.fhbrewards.com or call the Redemption Call Center at 1-800-868-2856.

First Hawaiian Bank (www.fhb.com) with $12.8 billion in assets was founded in 1858 and is Hawaii's oldest and largest bank. It has 58 branches in Hawaii, three on Guam and two on Saipan. It is a subsidiary of BancWest Corporation (www.bancwestcorp.com), a financial holding company. ***(FHB)***

Tourism council elects 2009 officers

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Marianas Tourism Education Council elected its new officers on Jan. 20, 2009. From left are secretary Coreen Palacios, vice chair Vicky Benavente, chair Ed Cho, member Denice Shoemake, treasurer Nhing Reyes, and Marianas Visitors Authority community projects manager Martin Duenas.

The Marianas Tourism Education Council has elected its 2009 officers as it prepares for another year of activities educating the community.

The new officers are Council chair Ed Cho (Saipan Grand Hotel), vice chair Vicky Benavente (PIC Saipan), secretary Coreen Palacios (Public School System), and treasurer Nhing Reyes (Ernst & Young).

"With tourism as the sole remaining industry supporting the CNMI economy, the role of MTEC to maintain dialogue with the community becomes even more important," said Cho. "Our goals in 2009 include educating the community on how each individual can make a difference in strengthening tourism."

In February MTEC launches its first television ad campaign. Other activities planned for the year include increased outreach to school MY WAVE (Welcome All Visitors Enthusiastically) clubs.

"We're looking for new ways to collaborate with the younger generation," said Cho. "Tourism is our present and their future, so we want to support their active participation in learning about the industry, welcoming visitors, and gaining skills to become our future workforce."

MTEC is a nonprofit organization promoting community awareness on the importance of the visitor industry in the CNMI. ***(PR)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUT-OUT CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

"Happy birthday Daddy Joseph T Santos Jr. Hope you enjoy your special day, and many more to come! We love you very much!" From your girls, Loutricia and Thonx.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

January 27, 1999

Citizenship concurred

A Washington plan that will grant long-time nonresident workers in the Northern Marianas U.S. citizenship or permanent residency status is acceptable, according to Lt. Gov. Jesus R. Sablan. The proposal, put forward by Edward B. Cohen, President Bill Clinton's special representative, in last week's consultations with the commonwealth will be contained in a revised legislation on takeover the White House is drafting. Washington officials are worried about the extreme reliance of the island's economy on foreign labor, which make up more than 90 percent of work force in the private sector, and a number of problems spawned in hosting nonresident workers, now numbering between 28,000 and 30,000.

Governor backs retirement-payment plan

Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio yesterday backed the proposal of retired teachers for the cash-strapped government to come up with a payment plan that will hasten the release of their 30 percent retirement bonus. The governor met with retirees to discuss possible ways that will prevent further delays in releasing the cash bonus, which under an existing law must be issued in lump sum. As a way of helping the administration curb its expenditures, more than a hundred government employees have heeded calls of the CNMI leader to avail of the benefits and allow unemployed residents take on their jobs.

January 27, 2000

'Probe Villagomez'

Sen. Ramon S. Guerrero yesterday formally sought an investigation into bribery allegations leveled against Commonwealth Utilities Corporation executive director Timothy P. Villagomez in connection with the controversial Saipan power project. But the utility chief called the charges "lies" as he shrugged off the senator's move, claiming it is tainted with "personal agenda." Guerrero asked the Senate Committee on Executive Appointments and Governmental Investigations to undertake the probe into what he described as "serious allegations" raised in an affidavit reportedly signed by Alice Fleming Villagomez, ex-wife of the executive director. A copy of the affidavit was attached to a one-page letter sent by Mr. Guerrero to EAGI Chair Sen. Joaquin G. Adriano in which the Saipan senator indicated his official request for such investigation.

Half of financial aid grantees suspended

Almost half of Northern Marianas students who have been granted financial assistance under the Paul Manglona Scholarship since school year 1991 were suspended from the program, a report from the government disclosed. However, recipients of the Teachers Scholarship Program, created under Public Law 11-34, performed better. The program has already produced 17 education graduates since 1997, with at least 87 of the total 135 grantees managed to maintain their scholarship. Government statistics noted that 43 recipients of the Paul Manglona Scholarship, created under Public Law 7-32, have been dropped from the program for failure to comply with grade and credit requirements.

January 27, 2003

Increased military presence sought

The Senate is batting for stepped up military presence on the island of Tinian to prepare the Commonwealth for the full-scale implementation of the Homeland Security Program. The upper house recently confirmed its stand on the issue through Senate Joint Resolution 13-12, which is requesting the U.S. Department of Defense to carry out its regional defense responsibilities. The resolution was introduced by Senators Pete P. Reyes and Ramon S. Guerrero. The Senate cited that the federal government leased 3,000 hectares of land on Tinian for purposes pursuant to Article VIII, Section 802 of the Covenant.

Anti-drag racing efforts beefed up

Public Safety Commissioner Edward Camacho ordered Friday an intensified effort against illegal drag racers in the Commonwealth. Camacho mentioned the need to strengthen existing police program against drag racing, following the reported widespread operations of the illegal activity, which is luring more kids on Saipan to danger. The police official reminded the public that drag racing remains an illegal activity in the Northern Marianas, as he warned that those caught violating the law will be dealt with accordingly.

Chamber wants rejection of tax relief suspension bill

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce has asked for the rejection of a bill seeking to suspend tax rebates for calendar year 2009, saying the economy needs more—not less—cash flow in the private sector.

Jim Arenoski, president of the Chamber, said while the group appreciates the government's desire to generate revenues during these challenging economic times, it is certain that a tax increase imposed when businesses are experiencing declining sales, increased costs, and an uncertain future with regard to both the foreign labor pool and tourism industry would be disastrous.

House Bill 16-170, introduced by Rep. David Apatang, seeks to appropriate funds realized from the tax relief suspension to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. (70 percent), the Public School System (20 percent), and Northern Marianas College (10 percent).

The bill, however, said if the CNMI government receives cover over tax funds from the federal government during fiscal year 2009, the secretary of the Department of Finance shall remit full tax relief for CY 209.

Arenoski said the bill would significantly and negatively impact individuals in largely the same way it will affect businesses.

"It would increase the taxes and decrease the net income of every family in the Commonwealth. We are unaware of any economic theory that supports the concept of increasing taxes in an effort to combat an economic depression," said Arenovski in a Jan. 23 letter to Rep. Ray Yumul, chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

HB 16-170 would result in taxpayers earning $20,000 or less each year to pay 10 times what they are currently paying in taxes, said Arenovski.

High-income taxpayers, he added, would see a doubling of their tax liability. Tax revenue from these individuals is an important component of the CNMI's overall revenue base.

"Those residents would unquestionably move to more convenient locations if the Commonwealth's tax incentives were removed, which would partially offset the increased income generated by the tax increase," said Arenovski.

The Chamber issued the two-page position paper after the co-chairs of its Government Relations Committee, Alex Sablan and Mike Johnson, reviewed and discussed the bill.

In December, PSS already expressed opposition to the bill, describing it as "a temporary solution that does not fully address the spectrum of the problem."

PSS said many people count on their tax relief checks to augment paychecks and use their checks to pay bills, buy groceries and other important tasks, and suspending the entire rebate will create an additional burden for the already financially strapped taxpayers.

VETERANS' CORNER

Veterans' briefing tomorrow

Gregory Reed, director of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Honolulu Hawaii, and David Larson, veteran service representative for Guam and the CNMI, will be on Saipan tomorrow, Jan. 28, to give a briefing and survey of veterans' benefit needs. The input of CNMI veterans is crucial for the establishment of a local Federal Veterans Benefit Office.

The briefing will be held Jan. 28, 2009, 9am-12 noon, at the Office of Military/ Veterans Affairs on Capital Hill, Building 1364. Any questions or further information, call Ruth Coleman at the Office of Military/ Veterans Affairs at 664-2650. ***(PR)***

Guam Vet Center to hold session on Saipan

The Guam Vet Center will be hosting an information and counseling session for all combat veterans and their dependents on Jan. 28 and 29, at the Office of Military and Veterans Affair on Capital Hill, Building 1364. Catherine Illarmo, the Department of Veterans Affairs' Team Leaders/LCSW from the Guam Vet Center, will be available on Jan. 28, 2009, from 9am to 4pm and on Jan. 29, 2009, from 9am to 12 noon.

There will also be a limited number of individual counseling appointments available. For those interested in counseling, call Illarmo at 1-671-472-7160/1 or Office of Military and Veteran Affairs executive officer Ruth Coleman at 664-2650. Any questions or for further information, call Coleman at 664-2650. ***(PR)***

Attention to families of Echo Company soldiers

The 9th MSC Family Programs Office is inviting dependents of deployed soldiers of Echo Company 100th BN 442nd and 368th MP Det. 1 for a *free* one-day Family Deployment Workshop and Youth Mini Camp on Saturday, Jan. 31, 2009, at the Pacific Islands Club from 9am to 5pm. You must register no later than Thursday, Jan. 29, 2009. For more information or to register, contact Marcela Moody, Family Program Assistance at (671) 344-5012, Saipan RDO Maj. Gregorio Sablan at 322-6671 or FRG leader Rita L. Chargualaf at 322-7814. ***(PR)***

Manglona and Bocago are '09 Little King & Queen of Hearts

Ian Julius O. Manglona and Taliyah Sablan Bocago were named 2009 Little King and Queen of Hearts during a simple awarding ceremony last Thursday at the Glimpses Publications office at the Transpac Business Center in Gualo Rai.

Both kids pocketed $100 cash each, courtesy of Glimpses of Saipan and *Beach Road Magazine*.

Also, they each won one camera phone from IT&E and one Subway Bear and two coupons for Foremost Scoops.

Joining the presentation were Stella T. Fong (Transpacific International Inc. Group vice president), Ed Manglona (IT&E marketing coordinator), Nola Hix (IT&E marketing associate), Veronica Taivero (IT&E marketing associate), and Susan Marchetti (BRM account manager).

It was the second year that BRM held the contest.

The 13 contestants who joined this year also received certificates of appreciation during the awarding ceremony.

The list included Jewel Monique Combinido, Mitziko Yema, Princess Hana B. Debengek, Cheyanne Koloni Perry Sablan, Jessica Nicole T. Pineda, William Everett Mitchell, Jaren Allan B. Lifoifoi, Paul Kikoa Lister, Jaron Albert B. Lifoifoi, Ayana I. Custodio, Arisa I. Custodio, Alicia Villegas, and Jason Villegas.

Sponsors of the event included IT&E, Emergency Management Office, Brown Tree Snake Program of the Division of Fish and Wildlife, American Red Cross, MRCI, CGD Pawnshop, Budget, Lollipops, Saipan Advertising, IBSS Canon, Coca-Cola Beverage Company, Micronesia Inc., Foremost, Subway, and Foremost Scoops. ***(Nazario Rodriguez Jr.)***

NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

Shown in photo are the winners, some of the contestants, sponsors and organizers. Front row from left are Jessica Nicole Pineda, Tiliyah Sablan Bocago (2009 Little Queen of Hearts), Mitziko Yema, Ian Juliu O. Manglona (Little King), Cheyanne Koloni Perry Sablan, and Princess Hana B. Debengek. At the back, from left, are Ed Manglona, Nola Hix, Stella Fong, and Susan Marchetti.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP09-OPA-040

SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 06, 2009 • TIME: 4:00 P.M.

"DRAFTING OF AND TRAINING ON A CNMI OPA MANUAL FOR THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC AUDITOR"

THE RFP PACKAGE MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY IN LOWER BASE, SAIPAN DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

ALL INQUIRIES MAY BE DIRECTED TO MR. MICHAEL PAI, PUBLIC AUDITOR BY FAX TO (670) 322-7812 OR E-MAIL TO mpai@opacnmi.com NO LATER THAN **JANUARY 30, 2009, CLOSE OB BUSINESS.**

PREFERENCE IS AVAILABLE TO US CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS AS PER PUBLIC LAW 15-95 AND AS FURTHER AMENDED BY PUBLIC LAW 15-118 AND MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE PROPOSAL IF PREFERECED IS CLAIMED.

/s/ **MICHAEL PAI**
PUBLIC AUDITOR

/s/ **HERMAN S. SABLAN**
Director, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB09-GOV-043
(1/20/09)

SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 12, 2009 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"PROCUREMENT OF A FORKLIFT FOR THE CNMI WATER TASK FORCE"

A COPY OF THE SPECIFICATION MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY IN LOWER BASE, SAIPAN DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

PREFERENCE IS AVAILABLE TO U.S. CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS AS PER PUBLIC LAW 15-95 AND AS FURTHER AMENDED BY PUBLIC LAW 15-118 AND MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BID IF PREFERENCE IS CLAIMED.

/s/ TIMOTHY P. VILLAGOMEZ
LT. GOVERNOR

/s/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLANNING AGENCY
Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center
P.O. Box 501133 Chalan Kanoa • Saipan, MP 96950
TEL: (670) 664-4550 • Fax: (670) 664-4560

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC §9912, hereby giving notice that the CNMI State Advisory Group (SAG), also known as the "Youth Advisory Council" (YAC) of the Criminal Justice Planning Agency will hold an Award Meeting on **Friday, January 30 2009, 9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M., Napu Conference Room, Pacific Island Club, Saipan**

AGENDA

I. Call to order

II. Roll Call

III. Review and Adoption of Agenda

IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes *(Award Meeting – November 21, 2008)*

V. Old Business

- Plans for 2009 Submission of 3 year State Plan

VI. New Business

- Awarding of remaining 2008 Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws (EUDL)Grant
  - Department of Commerce
  - Public School System
  - Other
- Meeting with all EUDL Subgrantees

VII. Announcements

- Next Meeting

VIII. Adjournment

Should you need more information, please call the CJPA office.

/s/Mr. Edward Manibusan
Chairperson
CJPA Youth Advisory Council

/s/Mr. Jerome I. Ierome
Executive Director
CJPA

Publication of this notice was paid for with federal funds made possible by Grant# 2006-JF-FX-0045, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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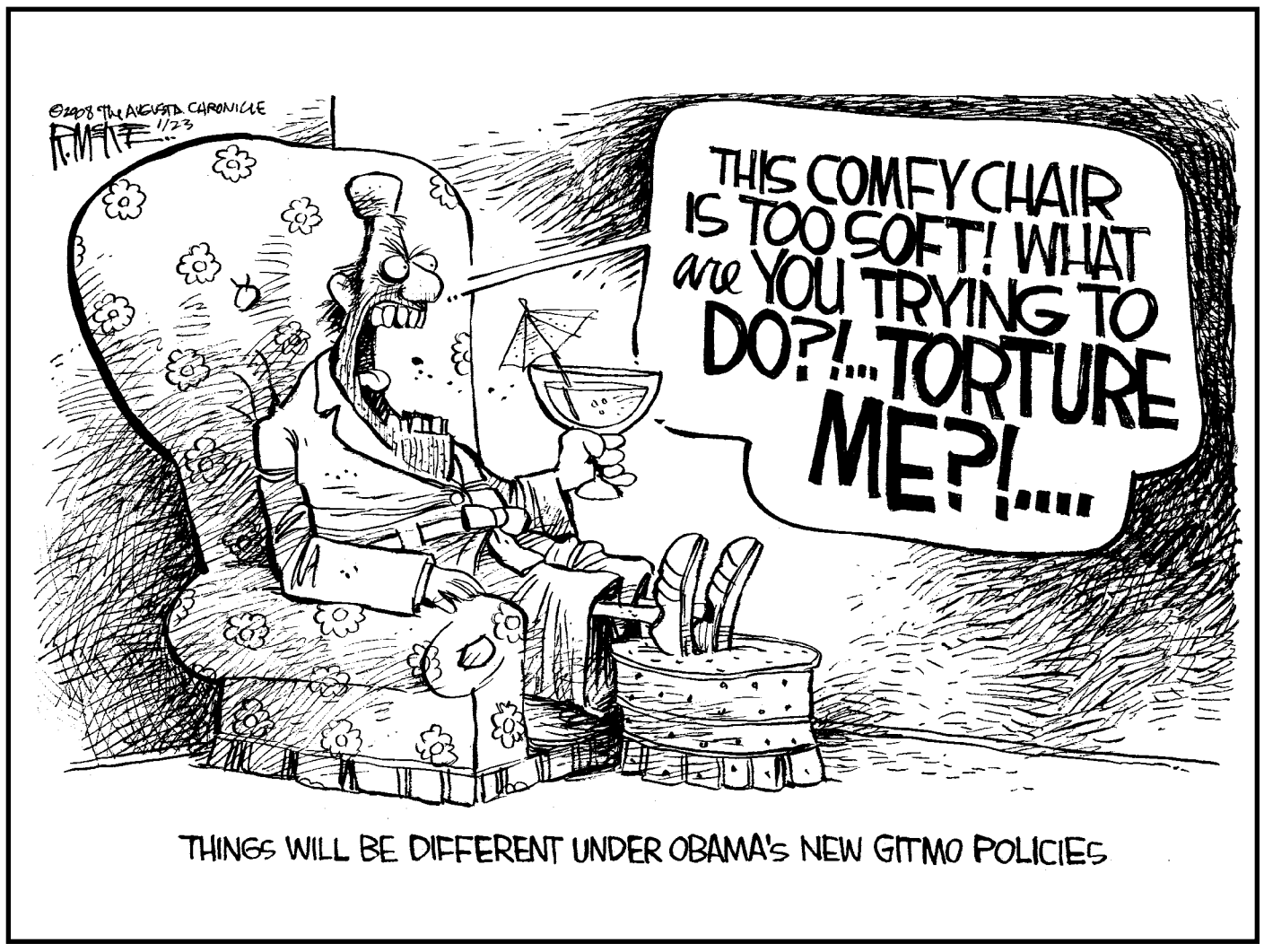

©2008 THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE
1/23
THIS COMFY CHAIR IS TOO SOFT! WHAT are YOU TRYING TO DO?!... TORTURE ME?!....
THINGS WILL BE DIFFERENT UNDER OBAMA'S NEW GITMO POLICIES

EDITORIAL

War planning test for administration

The welcome tone of pragmatism that President Obama conveyed during his transition and in his inaugural address seemed to carry over, during his first day in office, to one of the issues for which he will most need it: Iraq. Fulfilling an oft-stated campaign promise, the new president met with his defense secretary and senior military commanders and, according to a statement he issued, asked for "additional planning necessary to execute a responsible military drawdown from Iraq."

Accounts of the meeting suggested that Obama spent much of the time listening to reports from those who know Iraq best—Gens. David Petraeus and Ray Odierno and Ambassador Ryan Crocker. In addition, the president's statement did not cite the 16-month withdrawal timetable that became one of the signal slogans of his campaign—though his spokesman mentioned it. We hope that's evidence that Obama will not repeat one of President Bush's greatest mistakes—allowing ideological and political considerations to trump good military judgment.

There is broad agreement in Washington and Baghdad that U.S. troops should gradually be withdrawn, consistent with the goal of preserving Iraq's fragile and relative peace. Late last year, the outgoing administration concluded a formal agreement with the Iraqi government, laying out a plan for redeploying and withdrawing U.S. troops over the next three years. Both Iraqi leaders and U.S. commanders have made clear that they do not believe a pullout of all combat forces in 16 months is compatible with that strategy, and some U.S. officers have questioned whether, in purely logistical terms, it could be safely accomplished.

Odierno, who commands U.S. forces in Iraq, reportedly favors only a modest drawdown of troops this year, when Iraq will be staging two crucial elections and trying to resolve still-volatile questions of how to divide territory and power among regions and sectarian groups. The prospect of American forces leaving at the rate of a brigade a month, as required by a 16-month timetable, is regarded by leading Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish politicians as a potential catastrophe—though their public statements sometimes suggest otherwise.

Wednesday's briefing should have underlined those facts for Obama, if he did not know them already. The president can certainly be expected to press for the quickest U.S. withdrawal that logistics and conditions in Iraq will allow. But Iraq's continuing improvement and the low and declining rate of U.S. casualties—four soldiers have been killed in hostile action so far this month—ought to decrease the urgency of a quick pullout. Pragmatism calls for working within the agreed U.S.-Iraqi plan, and for allowing adjustments based on positive and negative developments in Iraq, rather than on any fixed and arbitrary timetable.

(c) 2009, The Washington Post

Letter to the Editor

Still a great thing for the CNMI

As we look to the future, this letter is in response to Oscar Rasa's recent statements that he made in the *Marianas Variety* concerning the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument.

He said, "the economic factor for the establishment of the monument remains 'highly speculative' and the issue about preservation and conservation is moot." By his comments, he seems to want what we had asked for in the original proposal; however, the final marine monument as designated was diminished in size, as were the protections to the fish, so that the economics changed and the preservation/conservation of the waters were compromised (meaning marginalized). He is right about the economics being speculative, but it always was; however, the marine monument as proclaimed is not what the Friends of the Monument had asked for and the issue of conservation is never "moot" when it comes to WESPAC's historical failure to manage the fisheries responsibly in a "sustainable" manner. We should all be a little scared with the Governor's pick for the advisory council, which contains all WESPAC supporters and opponents to the marine monument.

According to the economic study on the proposed marine monument, authored by University of Guam economics professor Dr. Tom Iverson, published and presented to the public in June 2008, the declaration of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument would result in several positive economic stimuli for the failing CNMI economy: (1) an increase in federal dollars, (2) an increase in research, and (3) a small increase in tourism due to the increase in worldwide media exposure.

The exploratory economic study made certain basic assumptions. Logically, one of them was that the NOAA-National Marine Sanctuaries program would manage a potential monument in the CNMI, as they were currently doing so in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands with the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument. This is the agency that deals with marine sanctuaries. The second was that the monument would be the largest or second largest in the world with the strongest possible protections against overfishing and other commercial extractions. Some of these assumptions turned out to be speculative, as it appears the monument will be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, it is smaller than we expected or hoped for, and it allows for commercial and recreational fishing in the areas we proposed. Moreover, the USFWS does not have much experience with marine sanctuaries, but that is what we have to work with now. In the end, it was all speculative since it is not what we and 6,000 other residents asked for when they signed the petition.

These changes in the basic assumptions by local leaders, will have an effect on the specific benefits, but the benefits will still be in those general categories. The monument will nevertheless result in more federal dollars coming to the CNMI. A visitors center is no longer a certainty, because the NOAA-National Marine Sanctuaries was left out of the language of the proclamation by negotiations and is not the manager. However, there will still be staff for management, enforcement, and education. NOAA-National Marine Sanctuaries has all these great educational curriculum; what is to become of that? It is unknown at this point how many jobs will be created because of all the changes to the original proposal and comparative studies of other USF&WS protected areas, which are mostly land-based anyway, are unavailable.

The monument will result in an increase in research, as attention is drawn to the deepest, darkest place on earth. In fact, Woods Hole is scheduled to study the Mariana Trench this year. It is sending an expedition to the bottom of the Mariana Trench using a new Hybrid ROV they have developed, which will film the Challenger Deep in HD. Agnes McPhetres calls this increase in researchers "a new type of tourist." These "new" tourists will come to Saipan to charter boats, stay in hotels, rent cars, and can spread the word to the rest of the world what an interesting place we all live in.

There will be an increase in tourism. A few high-end tourists will undoubtedly be drawn to dive the Maug Lagoon. The reason they aren't coming now is because they don't even know it exists. Most of the tourists will come to Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. The monument and all the free worldwide press it is continuing to generate will solidify our reputation as a beautiful tourist destination.

I would point out that several hundred favorable articles about the Mariana Islands appeared in publication*s* around the world, from the *London Times* to the *Washington Post* and ABC News, sending untold numbers of people rushing to their world maps to find out where the Trench is located. The free advertising from the monument announcement resulted in more favorable publicity for the CNMI than the MVA could afford to buy in 10 years. In terms of marketing the CNMI, it was a home run.

Mr. Rasa noted that the local people's concern regarding traditional fishing was addressed by the monument declaration, but added that "bottom-line" for the federal government is national defense. "The military is going to take over the place." This is an absurd comment since, regardless of what anyone wants, the U.S. military will do what they need to do to ensure the safety and protection of the United States and its citizens.

Finally, regardless of any legacy that the outgoing president may have obtained, the benefits of having a marine monument in our backyard is, without question, a great thing for the CNMI.

Ken Kramer
Gualo Rai, Saipan

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Letters to the Editor

Reading vs comprehending

Having twice now cited the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court's 1990 Wabol v. Villacrusis ruling in letters to the editor, Danny Aquino Jr. might now consider reading, or perhaps seeking to understand and/or refraining from seemingly distorting the limitations inherent to that ruling.

Nowhere in the ruling was considered the prohibition against persons of NMI descent to sell land to whomever they choose, the equal protection deprivations inherent to such a prohibition, or the detriment thereby inflicted upon those persons of NMI descent. Those persons of NMI descent cannot sell to whomever they want. And so their sale market is limited solely to others of NMI descent. Meaning they must sell if at all to the local realty-royalty oligarchs of NMI descent—we know who they are—for the pittance they offer to pay while facing no free market competition other than fellow realty-royalists. Ask the ordinary citizenry of NMI descent facing imminent foreclosure at the hands of CNMI governmental institutions about this, and see how they feel.

Nowhere in the ruling was considered the present CNMI economic and political conditions, which so markedly differ from the 1990 conditions. Nor was there contested by the litigants the justification for the Article XII restrictions given those conditions. Were these factors then and now relevant? In the 9th Circuit's words: "The importance of the constitutional right at stake makes it essential that a decision ... rest on a solid understanding of [present conditions in the [CNMI]".

Nowhere in the ruling was highlighted that in the not-so-distant future—a future hair-trigger-close today—this Article XII discrimination might by will of the CNMI electorate itself be tossed out, absent frustration of CNMI-federal mutual interests but, rather in furtherance of those interests.

Nowhere in the ruling was considered the prospect, ultimately borne out, that CNMI legislators would contrive Senate Legislative Initiative 11-1 restricting, solely to persons of NMI descent, the ability to vote on issues pertaining to Article XII; that the CNMI Senate and House would pass this discriminatory voting scheme on Nov. 13, 1998, and June 24, 1999, respectively; that an electorate ill-served and woefully-uninformed by its ostensible legislative leadership would ratify by Nov. 6, 1999 electoral ballot this unlawfully discriminatory measure yet on the books today; or, that given the opportunity, the U.S. Supreme Court in Rice v. Cayetano, 528 U.S. 495 (2000), would strike down with vehemence such racist/blood quotient voting abominations in the Hawaiian motif seemingly adulated, and so oft emulated, by today's CNMI Apartheidentia.

And nowhere in the ruling did any equal protection analysis or decision transpire, the court leaving this analysis to conditions not present in 1990 but so profoundly germane to the CNMI's dismal circumstances today.

Of perhaps equal note, the Ninth Circuit Court was not and will not hold final sway respecting Article XII race-based discrimination. As evinced most recently, matters of equal rights to which all in the CNMI are entitled to may be litigated in the U.S. courts in Washington D.C.—the same courts in which CNMI officials themselves have opted so recently to fund anti-U.S. litigation, at inordinate CNMI taxpayer expense, unequivocally detrimental from any rational standpoint to those taxpayers themselves.

Beyond the realm of court opinions lurks also the cognizance of absurdity here—given the irrefutable fact, that is, that U.S. race-based legislative/judicial equality designs were conceived under mindset of protecting minority interests (like those of African Americans) from overwhelming majority electoral control (like that of Caucasian Americans)…while, by contrast, the CNMI's race-based schemes have been designed and perpetuated with overt intent to promote the interests of the persons-of-NMI-descent-majority (like those of Chamorro/Carolinian ancestry) while protection of their fellow-American minorities' equal protection rights is neither pretended nor seemingly conceivable to this majority's elected and self-professed community leaderships.

Of course, lacking restraint, this inequity has become ever pervasive in the CNMI, creeping from Article XII restrictions years ago, to voting rights restrictions, and perhaps more noticeably on to the realm of race-based entitlements (for the NMI descent majority), and race-based discrimination (against non-NMI-descent Americans), in facets ranging from governmental loans, to off-island medical referrals and the homestead program (through which, of course, U.S. taxpayers fund infrastructure in CNMI homestead communities founded and perpetuated on the notion of discriminatory, race-based, land-acquisition-for-free-with-ownership for the majority populace of NMI descent).

Now, some profess this duality is not intentional discrimination but rather a vital mechanism by which to facilitate closely knit communities of like-cultured-persons. Nothing new here. This notion was earlier propounded by those in places like Mississippi/Arkansas of the 1950s who advocated "separate but equal" restaurant and educational facilities—divided, that is, by skin color.

Not dissimilarly, this notion was also propounded by those in places like New York and Pennsylvania of the 1960s who advocated restricted club memberships and lakeside communities—admission/ownership, that is, exclusively by religious denomination.

As for the absurd fallacy of supposedly inalienable rights having been wickedly usurped by Uncle Sam, there comes to mind the 9th Circuit opinion above-described in which the court recognized that pursuant to the Covenant, the CNMI became "politically united with" and "under the sovereignty of the United States of America."

A perhaps consistent view, as spoken by a friend of Hawaiian ancestry: "Eh, brah—if you can spell 'sovereignty' you can have it!"

Of prospective further insight, a quick read of the Covenant preamble comes to mind, that portion which states: "WHEREAS, for over twenty years, the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, through public petition and referendum have clearly expressed their desire for political union with the United States…"

Respecting the notion that U.S. voting rights are not dependent on paying U.S. income taxes, well perhaps some extrapolation is in order: "If you live in the U.S. and you don't pay your taxes, you go to jail as a felon; and felons serving time in jail can't vote; and, in more than one state, this voting restriction becomes permanent, even after release from prison." 8th grade social studies, Mr. Cromie.

As for political wannabes (and ghostwriters) inclined to feigned, indignant, umbrage, e.g., denouncing as somehow "divisive" the phrase "real American," well, gosh-golly-gee-willickers-Mr. Ziffel!

Is the phrase "real American" termed "divisive" only when penned for newspaper publication by a U.S. citizen of non-NMI-descent? After all, that phrase originated, by way of a letter to the editor bearing Mr. Jesse Torres' name. As explicitly referenced in the follow-up letter bearing aspirant CNMI politico Aquino's name.

Bruce Jorgensen
Washington, D.C.

CUC's lack of knowledge, mismanagement, or incompetence

First off, I must make it clear that these ideas that I am putting forth are mine and mine alone.

If you read my first two letters to the editor, you will remember that I talked about the automatic reclosures on the power line. I was asking why they were removed. This week I went to CUC and offered to repair them (free of charge) if they would put them back in place. I was informed that the reason that they were removed was because they had one by one burned up. I do not know what happened but this I do know. For five years I took care of these reclosures. They were in just as good a condition when they were taken out of my care as they were when I first started taking care of them. This tells me that after they were taken out of my care, no one took care of them. I used to go out every three or four weeks and clean them and check the batteries. It is called preventive maintenance. If they had been taken cared of they would have not burnt out. Now we the ratepayers will have to pay the cost for CUC to buy new reclosures. It sounds to me that the reclosures get the same maintenance as the engines in the power plant. You tell me if this is the way to run a utility!

The Legislature (the good old boys who like to spend our money)

Most of the people are blaming the Governor for the mess we are in. They can make some real good arguments to that point. But the truth of the matter is that this mess started years ago because the Legislature did not do their job. It is the responsibility of the Legislature to keep the government spending within the amount of money that they have. But it seems that the good old boys think they can just keep on spending money whether they have it or not. Every working person on the island knows that many times we have to decide what is necessary and what we want. Many times the things that we just want we cannot have because the money has to go to what we need. If only the Legislature could figure this out.

Any person with any understanding of how business is run knew that when President Clinton signed the North America Free Trade Agreement the garment was dead. But what did the Legislature do? Instead of collecting the taxes that were due the island, they gave them every tax break in the book. Now we have residents who deserve to retire but cannot because the government did not pay the Retirement Fund what the law required them to. So I ask you, who was the Legislature working for: the local residents or the garment factories? You decide.

As you all know this is an election year. All the politicians are going to be coming out and tell all the wonderful things they are going to do for us. Well, I think we all know that as soon as they get re-elected they all forget all the things they promised and go back to the same old routine (What is in it for them?). I say that it is time for some new blood in the Legislature. So please use your vote wisely. Forget who you are related to and vote for the ones that will work for the people.

Fred Prosser
As Matuis, Saipan

Fraudulent marriages

In my last letter, I wrote that immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and Permanent Residents filing fraudulent documents to get U.S. green cards should be very afraid. After all, in a small community everybody tends to know everybody else's business, and your neighbors, friends, and co-workers already know if you are in fact married or just living a lie. Besides, what we common people do not know, the FBI most assuredly will know. So be afraid!

The same warning should go to IR's of citizens of the freely associated states such as FSM, Palau, and the Republic of Marshall Islands. Those who are actually married and living with their spouses have nothing to be afraid of since they will probably receive the assistance they need from each respective government. But those who have knowingly filed fraudulent documents with CNMI Immigration Office, year after year, stand to be investigated, fined, and deported. I am talking about those who "married" a citizen of the FAS states only on paper while he/she was actually married to someone else and has continued to live with, cohabitate, and raise a family with this someone else. If this is not a clear indication of fraud, I do not know what is.

If you are guilty of fraud, you know who you are. We know who you are. Your neighbors know who you are. Your co-workers know who you are. How long do you really think you will be able to keep making a mockery of marriage in order to remain here, taking jobs away from lawful residents?

Your neighbors who are legal and lawful residents of the CNMI are probably jobless while you and your spouse are working here after having obtained status under false pretenses and fraudulent means. Do you really think it is okay? Do you really think you deserve the respect of the community for having lied to all of us from the very beginning for your own selfish interest? And exactly what do you tell your children? Or do you just tell them it is okay to lie and to keep lying?

Jobless residents and citizens need to be more vigilant about these individuals who are here fraudulently. Report them because they are possibly the reason why you are not able to get a job.

As for the "wives" or "husbands" of these individuals, please be afraid also. You could be fined for aiding and abetting. Or even go to the monkey house.

Silech Terei
Upper Navy Hill, Saipan

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲86° ▼78°	▲86° ▼78°	▲86° ▼78°	▲86° ▼78°	▲86° ▼78°

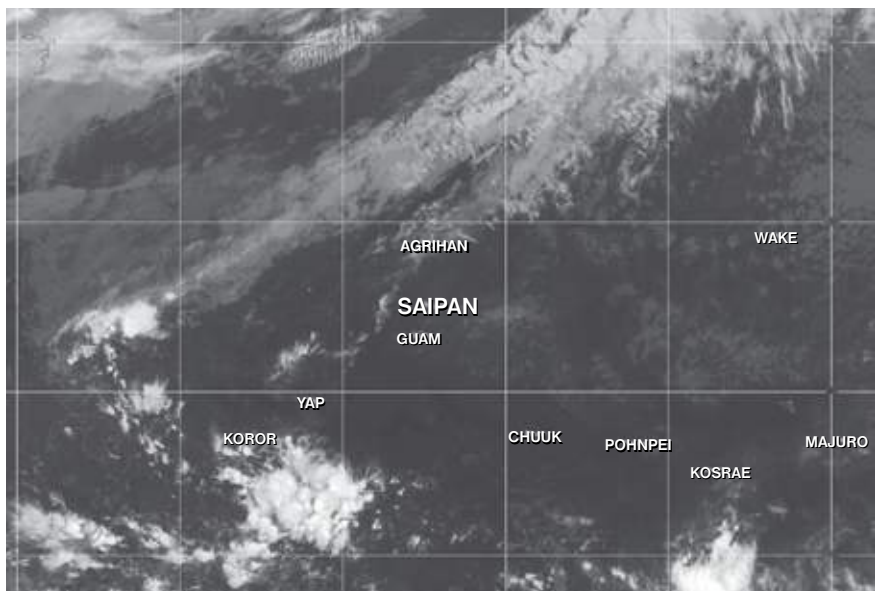
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲83	▼75
Palau	Showers	▲87	▼77
Yap	Showers	▲89	▼77
Chuuk	Showers	▲89	▼79
Pohnpei	Mostly Sunny	▲86	▼76
Kosrae	Mostly Sunny	▲88	▼76
Majuro	Showers	▲86	▼77

Around The Globe

Auckland	Partly Sunny	▲73	▼57
Beijing	Sunny	▲43	▼27
Hong Kong	Showers	▲61	▼57
Honolulu	Cloudy	▲76	▼61
London	Mostly Cloudy	▲45	▼41
Los Angeles	Partly Sunny	▲64	▼46
Manila	Showers	▲83	▼73
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	▲95	▼70
Miami	Partly Sunny	▲77	▼66
New York	Snow	▲32	▼22
Osaka	Partly Sunny	▲48	▼31
Paris	Cloudy	▲42	▼33
Pusan	Sunny	▲45	▼26
Rome	Showers	▲50	▼37
Salem	Cloudy	▲42	▼39
San Francisco	Partly Sunny	▲58	▼42
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲37	▼19
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲51	▼35
Washington, DC	Snow	▲33	▼25

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, JAN. 26, 2009
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front enters the discussion area near Minami Tori Shima at 25N152E and extends southwestward to 23N150E then continues as a shear line through the northern tip of the CNMI at 20N145E to beyond 130E at 15N. Extensive cloudiness and patchy rain are found along and up to 300 miles northwest of this boundary. Converging winds south of the boundary mentioned above are causing scattered showers over the northern CNMI and northeastward to Minami Tori Shima within 90 miles of a line from 18N145E to 25N155E. Trade-wind convergence is combining with favorable upper-level dynamics to create scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms just south of Koror or south of a line from 7N132E to 5N142E. A trade-wind disturbance is generating scattered showers northeast of Majuro within 155 miles of a line from 8N172E to 14N180 and over Butaritari Atoll south of a line from 3N172E to 8N180.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
2:28 AM Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet
9:19 AM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
2:53 PM Today	Low Tide:	1.1 Feet
7:47 PM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:47 AM	6:13 PM
Wednesday	6:47 AM	6:13 PM
Thursday	6:47 AM	6:14 PM
Friday	6:47 AM	6:14 PM
Saturday	6:46 AM	6:15 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	7:13 AM	6:59 PM
Wednesday	7:51 AM	7:48 PM
Thursday	8:27 AM	8:37 PM
Friday	9:03 AM	9:26 PM
Saturday	9:39 AM	10:17 PM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2009

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota			
CO9597	11:50am	12:25pm	1,7
Saipan-Guam			
CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	Daily
CO9313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
CO9597	11:50am	1:20pm	1,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	2,3,4,5,6
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Narita			
NW 099	5:00am	7:35am	Daily
NW 078	8:20am	1:30pm	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily
Guam-Narita			
NW 73	4:10pm	7:00pm	Daily
NW 81	3:55pm	6:55pm	Daily
Saipan-Osaka			
OZ 119	4:00am	6:40am	1,4,6
NW 083	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Guam-Osaka			
NW 79	4:45pm	7:35pm	Daily
Saipan-Nagoya			
NW 078	8:20am	11:05am	Daily
Guam-Nagoya			
NW 23	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Incheon			
OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 119	4:00am	11:25am	1,4,6 via Osaka
OZ 606	3:20pm	7:00pm	Daily
Saipan-Busan			
OZ 608	3:20am	6:50am	1,4,5,7
Saipan-Shanghai			
FM 844	2:50am	5:40am	2,6
Rota-Guam			
CO 9597	12:50pm	1:20pm	1,7
Guam-Palau			
CO 953	7:40pm	8:40pm	1,7
CO 893	5:50pm	6:50pm	3,5
Palau-Manila			
CO 893	7:35pm	9:10pm	3,5
Guam-Manila			
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	3,5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:50am	1,2,4,6,7
Nagoya-Manila			
NW 71	8:40pm	11:55pm	Daily
Incheon-Hongkong			
OZ 721	9:20am	12:00pm	Daily
OZ 723	7:45pm	10:35pm	Daily
OZ 7173	8:00pm	10:50pm	5,7
Narita-Manila			
NW 1	7:00pm	10:55pm	Daily

ARRIVALS

Rota-Saipan			
CO 9598	3:25am	4:00am	5,6
Guam-Saipan			
CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,2,3,4,7
CO9598	2:30am	4:00am	5,6 via Rota
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9600	10:20am	11:10am	Daily
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily
Narita-Saipan			
NW 076	10:15am	2:40pm	Daily
NW 077	6:25pm	1:20am+1	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 100	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily
Narita-Guam			
NW 74	9:45am	2:20pm	Daily
NW 82	10:30am	3:10pm	Daily
Osaka-Saipan			
OZ 120	9:50pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7
NW 084	10:40am	3:05pm	Daily
Osaka-Guam			
NW 80	10:30am	3:00pm	Daily
Nagoya-Saipan			
NW 077	9:00pm	1:20am+1	Daily
Nagoya-Guam			
NW 24	10:00am	2:30pm	Daily
Incheon-Saipan			
OZ 605	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
OZ 603	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ 120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7 via Osaka
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
Busan-Saipan			
OZ 607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3,4,6,7
Shanghai-Saipan			
FM 843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1,5
Guam-Rota			
CO 9598	2:30am	3:00am	5,6
Palau-Guam			
CO 954	2:30am	5:25am	1,2
CO 892	2:35am	5:30am	4,6
Manila-Palau			
CO 892	10:10pm	1:50am+1	3,5
Manila-Guam			
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	3,5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:10pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7
Manila-Nagoya			
NW 72	6:30am	11:05am	Daily
Hongkong-Incheon			
OZ 724	12:30am	4:50am	Daily
OZ 7183	12:45am	5:05am	1,4,6
OZ 722	1:30pm	5:45pm	Daily
Manila-Narita			
NW 2	7:45am	12:40pm	Daily

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Business

Democrats: Stimulus plan no quick fix for economy

WASHINGTON (AP)—The White House warned Sunday that the country could face a long and painful financial recovery, even with major government intervention to stimulate the economy and save financial institutions.

"We're off and running, but it's going to get worse before it gets better," said Vice President Joe Biden, taking the lead on a theme echoed by other Democratic officials on the Sunday talk shows.

At the end of the Obama administration's first week, the party in power at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue sought to lower expectations for a quick fix despite legislation expected to pass by next month that would pump billions of dollars into the economy. Democrats also opened the door for even more government aid to struggling banks beyond the $700 billion bailout already in the pipeline.

Congress has given President Barack Obama permission to spend the second $350 billion of a Wall Street bailout package even though lawmakers have criticized the Bush administration for the way it spent the first half. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said she is open to additional government rescue money for banks and financial institutions. But she said taxpayers must get an ownership stake in return.

AP

In this photo provided by CBS, Vice President Joe Biden appears on CBS's "Face the Nation" in Wilmington, Del., Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009.

Biden said Obama's choice for Treasury secretary, Timothy Geithner, will recommend whether more money is needed for the banks. Geithner could be confirmed by the Senate as early as Monday.

Congress is working on an $825 billion economic recovery package that dedicates about two-thirds to new government spending and the rest to tax cuts. Separate proposals making their way through the House and Senate would combine tax cuts for individuals and businesses, help for cash-strapped state governments, aid for the poor and unemployed, and direct spending by the federal government.

Dealers asked to buy more Chryslers to aid company

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—With Chrysler LLC's U.S. sales down 30 percent last year, an economy mired in recession and the automaker living on government loans, the last thing you'd expect a dealer to do is order more cars and trucks.

But that's exactly what Michael Andretta, owner of a Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge dealership in central Pennsylvania, intends to do after being inspired by Vice Chairman Jim Press' presentation at an auto dealers convention in New Orleans.

"I'm going to go back and I'm going to order cars that I don't need," Andretta said Sunday after Press and other Chrysler managers met with dealers at the National Automobile Dealers Association convention.

Chrysler executives asked the dealers each to order a wholesale allocation set by the company that totals 78,000 vehicles for February, and Andretta and other dealers said they have no problem doing it. The company has a total 3,300 dealers nationwide.

"A feeling we took away from this meeting is that we're all in this together," Andretta said. "And that we're going to survive together, that we're doing the right things."

General Motors Corp., the other U.S. automaker receiving government loans, held a similar meeting Sunday, and while dealers said executives were upbeat, they gave little specifics on GM's plans, especially what the company plans to do with the struggling Hummer, Saab and Saturn brands.

Investors await earnings, Obama's stimulus plan

NEW YORK (AP)—As Wall Street waits for Congress to act on President Barack Obama's stimulus plan, investors will look to a swath of earnings reports and comments from the Federal Reserve this week for clues on when the economy might begin to improve.

Hundreds of companies including those in technology, energy and consumer products industries, will issue reports. Yahoo Inc., Sun Microsystems Inc. and Texas Instruments Inc. are among the tech firms reporting, while companies like Procter & Gamble Co., Kimberly-Clark Corp. and Starbucks Corp. will give an indication of consumers' willingness to spend. Reports from AT&T Inc., ExxonMobil Corp. and Caterpillar Inc. are also due.

While most major financial firms have already issued results, reports from American Express Co. and Wells Fargo & Co. could intensify concerns about the industry if they are worse than expected.

Wall Street has largely written off the fourth quarter as disappointing, and so investors for the most part have looked past weak earnings. Instead, the market's direction has largely been dictated by companies' forecasts. Any indication that business conditions will remain challenging in 2009 could rattle investors and send stocks falling, analysts said, while any positive surprises could give the market a boost.

"Everyone knows that the fourth quarter was bad," said Quincy Krosby, chief investment strategist at The Hartford. "If we can get some positive surprises in terms of guidance, like IBM's, the more we can get of that, it will help the tone of the market."

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Fed expected to keep rates at record lows

WASHINGTON (AP)—With the country stuck in a painful recession, the Federal Reserve is widely expected to keep its key interest rate at an all-time low this week and examine other unconventional ways to lift the economy. Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke and his colleagues are battling a three-headed economic monster: crises in the housing, credit and financial markets that—taken together—haven't been seen since the 1930s. While Bernanke has pledged to do all he can to provide relief, President Barack Obama and Congress are racing ahead to enact an $825 billion package of increased government spending and tax cuts to revive the economy. Against that backdrop, the Fed is all but certain to hold rates near zero and may offer greater insights into what other steps might be taken to ease the problems. The Federal Open Market Committee—the central bank's main policymaking group—opens a two-day meeting Tuesday to assess economic and financial conditions, review the effectiveness of programs already in place to deal with the trio of crises and examine new relief options going forward.

Calif farmers idle crops, veggie prices may rise

MENDOTA, Calif. (AP)—Consumers may pay more for spring lettuce and summer melons in grocery stores across the country now that California farmers have started abandoning their fields in response to a crippling drought. California's sweeping Central Valley grows most of the country's fruits and vegetables in normal years, but this winter thousands of acres are turning to dust as the state hurtles into the worst drought in nearly two decades. Federal officials' recent announcement that the water supply they pump through the nation's largest farm state would drop further was enough to move John "Dusty" Giacone to forego growing vegetables so he can save his share to drip-irrigate 1,000 acres of almond trees. "Taking water from a farmer is like taking a pipe from a plumber," said Giacone, a fourth-generation farmer in the tiny community of Mendota. "How do you conduct business?"

Credit Suisse compensates its Lehman investors

ZURICH, Switzerland (AP)—Credit Suisse Group said Sunday it has paid around 100 million Swiss francs ($86.7 million) in compensation to 2,000 clients who lost money in collapsed U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers. Most of the beneficiaries received the money in the third quarter, said spokesman Jan Vonder Muehll, confirming reports by the weeklies NZZ am Sonntag and Sonntagszeitung.Only 11 clients declined to accept the money, Vonder Muehll said. Switzerland's second biggest bank compensated clients who had half or more of their investments with Lehman Brothers and whose total investments were less than 500,000 francs ($433,700) he said. He declined to say how the level of compensation was worked out. "We've looked at each case individually," he told The AP.

Lehman—once the fourth-biggest U.S. investment bank—filed the biggest bankruptcy in U.S. history in September.

GateHouse Media case against NYTimes goes to trial

BOSTON (AP)—On one side is GateHouse Media, one of the nation's largest publishers of community newspapers. On the other is The New York Times Co., the parent company of *The Boston Globe* and its Boston.com Web site. The two publishers will square off in federal court this week in a case that is being closely watched by journalists, bloggers and Internet users. GateHouse filed a copyright infringement lawsuit last month, claiming that the Globe's new community Web sites use online material from GateHouse without permission. GateHouse claims Boston.com violates copyright and trademark laws by taking GateHouse's newspaper headlines and lead sentences published on its "Wicked Local" Web sites. GateHouse alleges that Boston.com offers links that send readers directly to "Wicked Local" stories—bypassing ads posted on home pages that help fund its operation and creating confusion on the source of the original reporting.

State lawmakers bet gambling can help with budgets

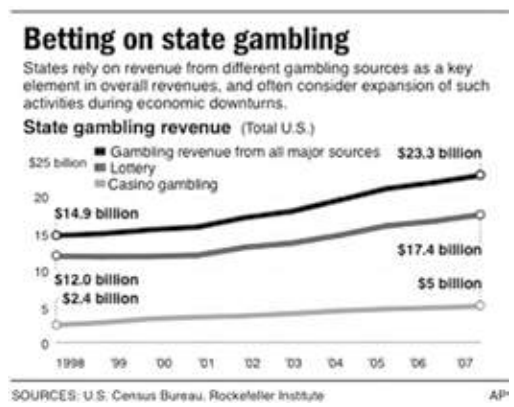
ATLANTA (AP)—A tell-tale sign America's chips are down: States are increasingly turning to gambling to plug budget holes.

Proposals to allow or expand slots or casinos are percolating in at least 14 states, tempting legislators and governors at a time when many must decide between cutting services and raising taxes.

Gambling has hard-core detractors in every state, but when the budget-balancing alternatives lawmakers must consider include reducing education funding or lifting sales taxes, resistance is easier to overcome, political analysts said.

"Who wouldn't be interested if you're a politician who needs to fund programs?" said Bo Bernhard, director of research at the International Gaming Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas—a government-funded program.

While gambling has not been immune from the recession, it has held up relatively well compared with states' other revenue streams, such as income and sales taxes. This helps explain why past industry growth spurts have been preceded by economic downturns, experts said.



For example, Rhode Island opened the country's first racetrack casino in 1992, and four states soon followed. More recently, states faced with sagging revenues during the 2001 recession joined multistate lotteries such as Powerball and gave more leeway to Native American tribes seeking to expand their casinos.

Nation

Impeachment trial to proceed without Ill. governor

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP)—If there's such a thing as a "normal" impeachment trial, the one that starts Monday in Illinois doesn't qualify.

The defendant, Gov. Rod Blagojevich, won't participate. He'll be talking to Whoopi Goldberg and Larry King instead of facing the state Senate. And while the Democrat acknowledges his conviction is certain, he refuses to resign.

Blagojevich (pronounced blah-GOY'-uh-vich) complains that the trial rules are unfair, but he and his lawyers didn't try to influence the rules as they were written or afterward.

After weeks of near-silence, Blagojevich has begun an energetic public relations campaign, comparing himself to the hero of a Frank Capra movie and a cowboy being lynched for a crime he didn't commit.

He told NBC's "Today" that when he was arrested on federal corruption charges, he took solace from thinking of other jailed leaders—Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi.

He also said his 5-year-old daughter, Annie, has asked whether he'll still be governor on her birthday in April.

"If I were a betting man, I'd say I probably won't be," Blagojevich said, according to a transcript released Sunday. "I think the fix is in and ... they've decided essentially to do a hanging without even a fair trial."

The full "Today" interview will air Monday, the same day the impeachment trial starts and Blagojevich is scheduled to appear on "Good Morning, America," "The View" and "Larry King Live."

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said Sunday that Blagojevich should be defending himself at the trial because the extra media attention won't impress the state senators who will be judging him.

"Barbara Walters is not on his jury," Durbin said, referring to "View" co-host.

Legal experts see little benefit to Blagojevich from boycotting the trial while refusing to resign. The decision means he'll still be leaving office soon, but only after proceedings guaranteed to put him in a bad light.

Senators, and thus the public, will hear details of the criminal charges against Blagojevich. They're likely to hear recordings that allegedly reveal the governor talking about signing legislation in exchange for campaign contributions. And in addition to simply removing Blagojevich, the Senate could vote to bar him from ever again holding public office in Illinois.

Portland mayor won't resign over lying about teen lover

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—The mayor of Portland, Ore., said Sunday he would not resign despite calls for him to do so after he admitted he lied and asked a teenager to lie about their sexual relationship.

"Tomorrow, I go back (to) work as your mayor. I know I have let you down and made mistakes. I ask your forgiveness," Mayor Sam Adams said in a statement. "I believe I have a lot to offer the city I love during this time of important challenges."

Adams, who was just sworn in on Jan. 1, publicly apologized this past week for lying early in his campaign about the relationship with an 18-year-old man in 2005.

The scandal has resulted in an investigation by the Oregon attorney general and has divided the city and its gay and lesbian community. The police union and four Portland newspapers have called for his resignation, but Adams has found strong support to remain, including a Friday rally on his behalf at City Hall that drew more than 400 people.

In his statement, Adams said he would "work harder than I ever have in my life" to help see the city through the tough economic times.

Two of the leading business associations in Portland had taken a wait-and-see stance.

Steve Holwerda, Chairman of the Portland Business Alliance, said in a statement the board had differing views on whether Adams should resign but they agreed it was a critical time for the city and some of its major development projects.

"Whether or not he stays in office should be based on whether he can lead our city effectively and with the integrity that all our citizens deserve," Holwerda said.

But the board of the Portland Area Business Association went further and said Adams should remain in office, but added, "pending the outcome of official investigation."

The teenager, Beau Breedlove, was a legislative intern when he met the mayor at age 17. He and the mayor both say their sexual relationship started after his 18th birthday, in June 2005.

Breedlove, now 21, told The Oregonian on Saturday that the relationship was consensual.

"I do not see any relationship that I ever had with Sam as me being taken advantage of," Breedlove told the newspaper. "I do not feel like I was ever a victim."

AP

Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich leaves his home in Chicago, Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009, carrying a biography of Winston Churchill before flying to New York to appear on national television shows.

NY Senate pick offers to find a 'common ground'

NEW YORK (AP)—Senator-designate Kirsten Gillibrand pledged Sunday to combat gun violence while protecting hunters' rights, saying "there's enormous space for common ground" on issues that she differs from fellow New York Democrats.

Gillibrand met Sunday with Gov. David Paterson, senior Sen. Charles Schumer and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, whose vacant Senate seat Gillibrand was appointed to fill Friday.

Marissa Shorenstein, a spokeswoman for Paterson, said the governor's office delivered paperwork in Washington on Sunday formalizing Gillibrand's appointment to the Senate.

Gillibrand, a second-term congresswoman who worked on the former first lady's 2000 Senate campaign, said Clinton "has always been a mentor of mine and someone I've always admired."

Paterson appointed Gillibrand after the presumed front-runner, Caroline Kennedy, withdrew from contention over personal reasons.

Paterson said at a news conference that, "Caroline Kennedy ... had gotten no indication that she wouldn't be selected."

Appearing earlier on "Fox News Sunday," Schumer said he was happy with Paterson's choice but added that Gillibrand's rural district was "more like Montana than New York City."

Gillibrand's voting record has earned her a 100 percent rating with the National Rifle Association, and her pro-gun stance is at odds with the views of many politicians in New York City and other downstate areas.

Evidence suggests that US Airways jet hit a soft body

WASHINGTON (AP)—A visual inspection of the battered, dented left engine of the US Airways jetliner that ditched in the Hudson River found no evidence of organic matter, but there are signs the plane hit a soft body, federal investigators say.

This engine and the right engine, which remained attached to the Airbus A-320 after the Jan. 15 ditching, will be shipped to their manufacturer, CFM International, in Cincinnati for thorough examination by safety board investigators. Both engines will be completely torn down to examine damage, and advanced equipment will be used to search for organic material not apparent during visual inspection.

The pilot reported the plane hit a flock of birds shortly after takeoff from LaGuardia Airport which shut down both his jets.

National Transportation Safety Board investigators said Saturday they visually examined the left engine after it was finally pulled 65 feet from the river bottom but saw no evidence of organic material.

The safety board also said the left engine, which was recovered on Friday, had dents on its inlet lip and broken and missing guide vanes.

Earlier this week, the safety board said the right engine also revealed evidence of "soft body damage" and that "organic material" was found in that engine and on the wings and fuselage. A single feather also was found.

ACROSS THE NATION

Boy, 14, dupes police, patrols Chicago for 5 hours

CHICAGO (AP)—A 14-year-old aspiring police officer donned a uniform, walked into a Chicago police station and managed to get an assignment—patroling in a squad car for five hours before he was detected, police said Sunday. The boy did not have a gun, never issued any tickets and didn't drive the squad car, Deputy Superintendent Daniel Dugan said. Assistant Superintendent James Jackson said the ruse was discovered only after the boy's patrol with an actual officer ended Saturday. Officers noticed his uniform lacked a star that is part of the regulation uniform. Police said they were investigating how the deception went undetected for so long in what they described as a serious security breach. Police said disciplinary steps are possible pending the outcome of the investigation. Police didn't identify the boy because of his age. He has been charged as a juvenile with impersonating an officer.

Latest in series of Pa. fires claims 15 homes

COATESVILLE, Pa. (AP)—The latest in a string of suspicious fires in this Philadelphia suburb tore through a block of row houses, damaging 15 homes, leaving several dozen people homeless and prompting city officials to declare a state of emergency. At least 30 arsons have been reported since the beginning of 2008, about half of them in the last three weeks. Police said the blazes may be part of a gang initiation, but there was no clear information who was committing the crimes or why. The latest fire was reported late Saturday at the rear of one house and quickly spread to adjacent homes in the Chester County community. "This is an arson, no question about it," City Manager Harry Walker said Sunday. The emergency declaration gives the city powers to deal with the situation without worrying about the budget, such as boarding up the buildings, assigning police to protect them and helping the families involved, Walker said.

Ohio police: Man kills adoptive father, 2 others

CINCINNATI (AP)—A man has been charged with killing his adoptive father, stepmother and 13-year-old stepsister, who managed to call 911 during the shootings in a home near Cincinnati, authorities said. Timothy Sturgel, 26, was arrested Saturday in the shooting deaths of Jerry Sturgel, 51; Mary Sturgel, 40, and 13-year-old Emily Hurst. He is being held in the Hamilton County Justice Center and is scheduled to be arraigned Monday on three charges of murder. Authorities were called to the house in Colerain Township by Emily, who told a 911 dispatcher that her stepbrother had shot her stepfather. In the taped call Saturday morning, Emily screamed, "He's coming. My mom!," before the line went dead. Police found the man outside the house, which had been set on fire. Sheriff's spokesman Steve Barnett said Sturgel was suspected of setting the blaze.

Asia

World's highest drug levels entering India stream

PATANCHERU, India (AP)—When researchers analyzed vials of treated wastewater taken from a plant where about 90 Indian drug factories dump their residues, they were shocked. Enough of a single, powerful antibiotic was being spewed into one stream each day to treat every person in a city of 90,000.

And it wasn't just ciprofloxacin being detected. The supposedly cleaned water was a floating medicine cabinet—a soup of 21 different active pharmaceutical ingredients, used in generics for treatment of hypertension, heart disease, chronic liver ailments, depression, gonorrhea, ulcers and other ailments. Half of the drugs measured at the highest levels of pharmaceuticals ever detected in the environment, researchers say.

Those Indian factories produce drugs for much of the world, including many Americans. The result: Some of India's poor are unwittingly consuming an array of chemicals that may be harmful, and could lead to the proliferation of drug-resistant bacteria.

"If you take a bath there, then you have all the antibiotics you need for treatment," said chemist Klaus Kuemmerer at the University of Freiburg Medical Center in Germany, an expert on drug resistance in the environment who did not participate in the research. "If you just swallow a few gasps of water, you're treated for everything. The question is for how long?"

Last year, The Associated Press reported that trace concentrations of pharmaceuticals had been found in drinking water provided to at least 46 million Americans. But the wastewater downstream from the Indian plants contained 150 times the highest levels detected in the U.S.

At first, Joakim Larsson, an environmental scientist at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, questioned whether 100 pounds a day of ciprofloxacin could really be running into the stream. The researcher was so baffled by the unprecedented results he sent the samples to a second lab for independent analysis.

When those reports came back with similarly record-high levels, Larsson knew he was looking at a potentially serious situation. After all, some villagers fish in the stream's tributaries, while others drink from wells nearby. Livestock also depend on these watering holes. Some locals long believed drugs were seeping into their drinking water, and new data from Larsson's study presented at a U.S. scientific conference in November confirmed their suspicions. Ciprofloxacin, the antibiotic, and the popular antihistamine cetirizine had the highest levels in the wells of six villages tested. Both drugs measured far below a human dose, but the results were still alarming.

"We don't have any other source, so we're drinking it," said R. Durgamma, a mother of four, sitting on the steps of her crude mud home in a bright flowered sari a few miles downstream from the treatment plant. High drug concentrations were recently found in her well water.

AP

Members of a Swedish research team, Linda Svensson, right, and Sanna Strindberg, collect mud samples from a stream in Patancheru on the outskirts of Hyderabad, India, Friday, March 28, 2007.

"When the local leaders come, we offer them water and they won't take it."

Pharmaceutical contamination is an emerging concern worldwide. In its series of articles, AP documented the commonplace presence of minute concentrations of pharmaceuticals in U.S. drinking water supplies. The AP also found that trace concentrations of pharmaceuticals were almost ubiquitous in rivers, lakes and streams.

The medicines are excreted without being fully metabolized by people who take them, while hospitals and long-term care facilities annually flush millions of pounds of unused pills down the drain. Until Larsson's research, there had been widespread consensus among researchers that drug makers were not a source.

The consequences of the India studies are worrisome.

As the AP reported last year, researchers are finding that human cells fail to grow normally in the laboratory when exposed to trace concentrations of certain pharmaceuticals. Some waterborne drugs also promote antibiotic-resistant germs, especially when—as in India—they are mixed with bacteria in human sewage. Even extremely diluted concentrations of drug residues harm the reproductive systems of fish, frogs and other aquatic species in the wild.

In the India research, tadpoles exposed to water from the treatment plant that had been diluted 500 times were nonetheless 40 percent smaller than those growing in clean water.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Indian police kill 2 suspected Pakistani militants

NEW DELHI (AP)—Indian police shot dead two suspected militants from Pakistan in a pre-dawn car chase Sunday near New Delhi, a government official said. The two men engaged in a gunbattle with the anti-terror squad in the suburb of Noida, which borders the Indian capital, said Amit Kumar, a constable attached to the local superintendent's office. Two AK-47 assault rifles, several rounds of ammunition, five hand grenades and a Pakistani passport and identity cards were recovered from the two men, Kumar said. The two men died on their way to a hospital, he said. An Indian police officer was also injured in the incident. Before he died one of the men identified himself as Farooq and his companion as Abu Ismail and said they were both from Pakistan, Kumar said. The documents and identities of the two men were being verified by police, he added.

Afghan president: US forces killed 16 civilians

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—President Hamid Karzai condemned a U.S. operation he said killed 16 Afghan civilians, while hundreds of villagers denounced the American military during an angry demonstration Sunday. Karzai said the killing of innocent Afghans during U.S. military operations "is strengthening the terrorists." He also announced that his Ministry of Defense sent Washington a draft technical agreement that seeks to give Afghanistan more oversight over U.S. military operations. The same letter has also been sent to NATO headquarters. Karzai in recent weeks has increasingly lashed out at his Western backers over the issue of civilian casualties, even as U.S. politicians and a top NATO official have publicly criticized Karzai for the slow pace of progress here. The back-and-forth comes as the new administration of President Barack Obama must decide whether to support Karzai as he seeks re-election later this year as part of the United States' overall Afghan strategy.

Vietnam ferry accident kills 40, mars Tet new year

HANOI, Vietnam (AP)—A small ferry overloaded with holiday shoppers sank in central Vietnam on Sunday, killing at least 40 people ahead of the traditional Lunar New Year. At least 36 passengers survived, a few by swimming to shore and others plucked by rescuers from the Gianh river in Quang Binh province, local police chief Phan Thanh Ha said. The boat's owner and captain were detained for questioning, Ha said. An initial investigation showed the wooden boat was overloaded with nearly 80 people, though it was designed to carry only 12. Searchers recovered 40 bodies, including 27 women -three of whom were pregnant—and seven children, he said. The people from Quang Hai village were crossing the river to buy things for the Lunar New Year festivities. Known as Tet in Vietnam, the new year is the country's biggest holiday and begins Monday.

China dams reveal flaws in climate-change weapon

XIAOXI, China (AP)—The hydroelectric dam, a low wall of concrete slicing across an old farming valley, is supposed to help a power company in distant Germany contribute to saving the climate—while putting lucrative "carbon credits" into the pockets of Chinese developers.

But in the end the new Xiaoxi dam may do nothing to lower global-warming emissions as advertised. And many of the 7,500 people displaced by the project still seethe over losing their homes and farmland.

"Nobody asked if we wanted to move," said a 38-year-old man whose family lost a small brick house. "The government just posted a notice that said, 'Your home will be demolished.'"

The dam will shortchange German consumers, Chinese villagers and the climate itself, if critics are right. And Xiaoxi is not alone.

Similar stories are repeated across China and elsewhere around the world, as hundreds of hydro projects line up for carbon credits, at a potential cost of billions to Europeans, Japanese and soon perhaps Americans, in a trading system a new U.S. government review concludes has "uncertain effects" on greenhouse-gas emissions.

One American expert is more blunt.

"The CDM"—the 4-year-old, U.N.-managed Clean Development Mechanism—"is an excessive subsidy that represents a massive waste of developed world resources," says Stanford University's Michael Wara.

Forced relocations have become common in China as people in hundreds of communities are moved to clear land for factories and other projects, provoking anger and occasionally violent protests. But what happened here is unusual in highlighting not just the human costs, but also the awkward fit between China's authoritarian system, in which complaints of official abuse abound, and Western environmental ideals.

Those ideals produced the Clean Development Mechanism as a market-based tool under the Kyoto Protocol, the 1997 agreement to combat climate change. The CDM allows industrial nations, required by Kyoto to reduce emissions of gases blamed for global warming, to comply by paying developing nations to cut their emissions instead.

Companies thousands of miles away, such as Germany's coal-burning, carbon dioxide-spewing RWE electric utility, accomplish this by buying carbon credits the U.N. issues to clean-energy projects like Xiaoxi's. The proceeds are meant to make such projects more financially feasible.

Kidnappers of 3 Filipino teachers urged to let them go for sake of education

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A teachers' association and city mayor appealed Monday to gunmen holding three teachers in the restive southern Philippines, saying the education of underprivileged youths in Muslim areas will suffer unless they are released.

The teachers were snatched while traveling by boat near Zamboanga city's Pangapuyan island on Friday and were believed to be taken to Basilan island, a stronghold of al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf militants who are notorious for demanding ransom.

They include one woman and two men, and the family of one of them reported receiving a call from the hostage together with a ransom demand. The family asked not to be identified for security reasons.

Zamboanga Mayor Celso Lobregat said the families were too poor to pay the ransom and the government would not pay either because that would encourage more abductions.

"The kidnappers should know that these teachers and their families cannot afford to pay ransom. And the losers in the end will be Muslim youths because teachers will no longer want to teach in far-flung areas," he said on Radio DZXL.

The teachers were commuting between predominantly Christian Zamboanga city and nearby islands, which like Basilan, are populated by minority Muslims.

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers said in a statement, "the perpetrators have not only endangered the lives of these everyday heroes but also trampled on the right of education of hundreds of poor children."

The Education Department initially told about 50 other teachers to stay away from nearby island schools but later told them to report to work Monday because police and the military would provide security.

Suspected Abu Sayyaf guerrillas are separately holding three international Red Cross workers on Jolo island who were abducted Jan. 15. Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro has ruled out military action to free them and said negotiations were under way for their release.

World

WORLD BRIEFS

Bolivians back new, pro-indigenous constitution

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP)—Bolivian voters embraced a new constitution Sunday that promises more power for the long-suffering indigenous majority and grants leftist President Evo Morales a shot at remaining in office through 2014. The charter passed easily in a country where many can still recall when Indians were forbidden to vote. But its sometimes vague wording and resistance from Bolivia's mestizo and European-descended minority foreshadows more political turmoil in an Andean nation polarized by race and class. Morales, Bolivia's first Indian president, says the charter will "decolonize" South America's poorest country by recovering indigenous values lost under centuries of oppression dating back to the Spanish conquest. Bolivia's Aymara, Quechua, Guarani and dozens of other indigenous groups only won the right to vote in 1952, when a revolution broke up the large haciendas on which they had lived as peons for generations. "The poorest people are the majority. The people with money are only a tiny few. That's what you have to consider," said Eloy Huanca outside a polling place in El Alto, a sprawling satellite city of La Paz. "They ran things before, and now it's our turn."

Darfur peacekeepers: Government planes bomb town

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—Sudanese government planes have bombed a rebel-held town in southern Darfur, killing a child, burning homes and sending civilians fleeing to a peacekeepers compound, the peacekeeping force said Sunday. The bombing on Saturday destroyed eight homes in the town of Muhajeria, home to 30,000 residents, many of whom were displaced from previous fighting, said Noureddine Mezni, spokesman for the U.N.-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur. The government has vowed to take control of the town from Darfur's most powerful rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement. The rebels seized control of Muhajeria earlier this month from another rebel group that has signed a peace deal with Sudan's government. The conflict in Darfur has pitted the Arab-led government in Khartoum against mainly ethnic African rebels who rose up in 2003 complaining of discrimination. Khartoum is accused of unleashing Arab militias to wage a campaign of violence on ethnic African civilians, including killings and rapes. U.N. officials say up to 300,000 people have been killed in the conflict and more than 2.5 million displaced. The Sudanese government says the figures are exaggerated.

Rwanda-Congo force pushes deeper into militia zone

KINSHASA, Congo (AP)—Rwandan and Congolese troops pushed deeper into zones in Congo held by Rwandan Hutu militiamen Sunday in a joint military operation designed to crush armed groups that have destabilized central Africa, a military spokesman said. Rwanda and Congo have been enemies for years, but the two neighbors suddenly changed tactics and began cooperating last week to disarm groups each nation had previously backed as proxies. Eastern Congo has been wracked by violence since Rwanda's 1994 genocide spilled war across the border. Hutu militias that participated in the massacres of more than 500,000 mostly ethnic Tutsi civilians sought refuge in Congo. Rwanda invaded Congo twice in the 1990s to eradicate the militias, though it was accused of plundering the neighboring country's vast mineral wealth instead. The militia's presence in Congo also gave birth in 2004 to a Tutsi rebellion led by Laurent Nkunda, who was allied to Rwanda.

Some global adversaries ready to give Obama chance

By PAUL HAVEN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

In his inaugural address, President Barack Obama signaled conciliation to America's foes by using the metaphor of an outstretched hand to an unclenched fist.

Already, there are signs that some of those foes were listening, sensing an opening for improved relations after eight combative years under President George W. Bush. Fidel Castro is said to like the new American leader, and North Korea and Iran both sounded open to new ideas to defuse nuclear-tinged tensions.

Obama

Unclear is what they will demand in return from the untested American statesman, and whether they will agree to the compromises the U.S. is likely to insist on in exchange for warmer relations.

Are the Castro brothers really willing to move toward democracy? Can Russia and the West heal their widening estrangement? Will Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez stop being a thorn in America's side?

Analysts say they see many bright opportunities amid the perils and complexities.

"In this dangerous world, in a world where America's leverage has either been exposed as not being as strong as the rhetoric implied or where it is simply diminishing, I think Obama's approach is exactly what America needs," said Robin Niblett, the director of Chatham House, the London-based think tank.

"We need an approach that gets others to show their hand, that makes others have to think harder about their diplomacy, rather than just to react to rather strident and fixed American positions."

Nowhere are the opportunities—and the risks—of diplomacy more stark than in the Middle East.

Iran still considers the U.S. the "Great Satan," but a day after Obama was sworn in, it said it was "ready for new approaches by the United States." Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said his country would study the idea of allowing the U.S. to open a diplomatic office in Tehran, the first since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Israel vows to back soldiers accused of war crimes

A Palestinian inspects damage following the Israeli army operation in Gaza at the Rafah refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009. AP

JERUSALEM (AP)—Special legal teams will defend Israeli soldiers against potential war crimes charges stemming from civilian deaths in the Gaza Strip, the prime minister said Sunday, promising the country would fully back those who fought in the three-week offensive.

The move reflected growing concerns by Israel that officers could be subject to international prosecution, despite the army's claims that Hamas militants caused the civilian casualties by staging attacks from residential areas.

"The state of Israel will fully back those who acted on its behalf," Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said. "The soldiers and commanders who were sent on missions in Gaza must know that they are safe from various tribunals."

Speaking at the weekly Cabinet meeting, Olmert said Israel's justice minister would lead a team of senior officials to coordinate the legal defense of anyone involved in the offensive.

"That decision is not going to prevent all these organizations and countries to pursue their efforts through legal means," Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki said at talks with European Union foreign ministers in Brussels. "So there is no immunity even if the decision was taken by the Israeli government."

Malki is a member of moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' government, whose authority extends only to the West Bank after rival Hamas violently took over Gaza in 2007.

Israel launched its 22-day offensive to try to halt Hamas rocket fire on southern Israel. The assault killed 1,285 Palestinians, more than half of them civilians, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights counted. Thirteen Israelis, including three civilians, were also killed.

At talks Sunday in Cairo aimed at solidifying the truce, Hamas official Ayman Taha said the Islamic group offered a one-year truce to Israel, including the reopening of border crossings to allow vital supplies into Gaza. He said Israel offered an 18-month truce, which Hamas rejected. Israeli officials refused to comment.

A low-level delegation from Abbas' West Bank government was also in Cairo for talks, but was not expected to meet with Hamas.

The European Union, Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey appealed to Hamas and the Palestinian Authority to form a unity government.

Israel and Hamas are bitter enemies and do not talk to each other, relying instead on Egyptian mediation.

In addition to the civilian death toll, Israel has faced international criticism for its use of white phosphorous, and for shelling attacks that struck United Nations schools and installations that were serving as shelters.

Although the use of phosphorous weapons to light up the night or to create smoke screens masking troops is permitted by international law, Amnesty International has accused Israel of committing a war crime by firing the munitions in densely populated areas.

In Gaza campaign, Israelis see a temporary success

SDEROT, Israel (AP)—Sderot's open-air market is bustling for the first time in a month, thanks to newfound quiet following Israel's punishing offensive in the Gaza Strip.

Many residents of this rocket-scarred town say they see the operation against Hamas as a long-overdue military success—but also believe the good times will be short-lived.

"There is no victory here, only quiet," said Eli Asayag, 55.

Sderot is less than a mile from Gaza, a frequent target for the homemade rockets from militants there over the past eight years. Thousands have exploded in this town of 20,000, traumatizing residents and damaging many houses and businesses. Six people have been killed and a few dozen wounded.

The satisfaction here with the Israeli military's performance is coupled with the despair of continuing to live in the shadow of violence. People see the recent offensive as a corrective after the inconclusive, frustrating war against Hezbollah guerrillas in 2006, and a stirring example of national unity.

But they also see it as a successful round in a match many expect will continue indefinitely.

"If this brings us a half-year of quiet or a year, it's good. If it brings us 10 years, it's great. But we never forget that Gaza will always be our neighbor, and as long as Hamas is in control there, we will be in danger," said David Buskila, the town's mayor.

Hagit Didi, a mother of three, left Sderot six months ago because of the rocket fire, relocating to the nearby town of Netivot—only to find herself in danger there when the range of Hamas rockets increased.

"There won't be quiet here for long. How can you defeat people like this?" she said. Her 8-year-old son has grown up with the rockets and has never slept anywhere but with her in her bed, Didi said.

During the fighting, Shimon Elmaliach, 41, who sells women's boots in the market, took his wares to Tel Aviv, where women bought boots they didn't need simply because he was from Sderot.

Overdrive

Ford makes over mess that was Mustang

By DAN NEIL
(C) 2009, LOS ANGELES TIMES

What interests me about the 2010 Ford Mustang might not interest you. I could stay up all night reading about taller tire sidewalls and their effect on suspension settings. You? Maybe not so much. I'm positively Nelly over the car's stiffer chassis—hubbah!—and cold air induction. You, on the other hand, might have more important things to think about.

Maybe you're a wee bit distracted on account of the economy tiptoeing on the bubbling brimstone edge of ruin. Ah, well, that brings us back to the Mustang, doesn't it? If Ford can reform a chintzy, gimpy, flubbery, moronic mess that was the Mustang, anything is possible.

Only two years ago, I couldn't have hated the Mustang more if one had run over my tongue. The car was cheap and plasticky inside, unsorted underneath and uncouth all around.

The 2010 Mustang—while still far from perfect—is summarily a more serious and charismatic car, with vastly better interior fittings and brass work, a keen updating of the boomer-centric sheet metal and (most important for me) a masterful revision of the ride-and-handling characteristics. These cars used to pitch, roll, over-rotate and flop around like a slain-in-the-spirit Pentecostal. The new car is the first decent-handling Mustang I've ever driven. Oh yeah, I said it. That just happened.

Here's the deal: Even if you care nothing about cars, you should take heart that Ford—big, old, thick with vested privilege—has managed so much reform in so short a time. As we ponder the depressing macrocosm and consider sticking our collective head in the oven, the Mustang's take-away message might be: Yes we can.

A bit of Mustang-ography: Born in 1964 from the loins of Lee Iacocca, Mustang is the second-longest-running sports car nameplate in the U.S., after Corvette (1953). For cost reasons, the original Mustang was built off the old Falcon platform, and somehow the tradition of sticking this supposedly sporty car onto the shoddiest, most obsolete rear-drive platform in Ford's larder lasted for decades.

The current generation of Mustang came out in 2004, wearing the high-gloss, design-schooled "retro-futurist" sheet metal penned by Sid Ramnarace. The car looked supercool. Alas, the same historical problem plagued it: a badly compromised chassis. Long after the market abandoned live-rear-axle geometry—except in trucks—the Mustang kept it because it was cheap, beefy and compact. And, for most buyers of the base V6-powered car, the live axle was a nonissue because those toupee-wearing wannabes weren't taxing the car very much.

However, when inevitably Ford developed its GT500 and GT500KR versions—supercharged cars with 500 plus hp—things got messy real quick. The power and torque of these engines overwhelmed the chassis. In December 2006, I called the Shelby GT500 "one of the creepiest handling modern muscle cars it's ever been my terrifying pleasure to drive." I was being kind.

Ideally, Ford would have completely redesigned the Mustang for 2010. After all, this car is going up against a very respectable Dodge Challenger and the new Chevrolet Camaro. I imagine when the program costs were laid out in front of Ford execs—half a billion dollars or so for a clean-screen redesign versus $100 million for a heavy revision—the decision was made for them.

What we have here, then, is a small masterpiece of fixing only what needs fixing. First, the saddle work: Lots of new, rich-feeling materials have been poured into the cabin, including—on the GT I drove—great stitch-pleated leather seats and door gussets. The instrument panel has been remodeled—now with two Crisco can-size apertures for the white-faced speedo and tach—and a textured aluminum fascia pulls together the dash.

Meanwhile, the between-the-seat console has been cleaned up and the hand brake gets a proper leather-like boot. In up-level models, Mustang can be ordered with a huge, 8-inch navigation screen in the center stack.

The exterior re-skin, meanwhile, seems to pour a bottle of hot-and-ornery on Ramnarace's design. The lines are sharper, the contours sleeker and more contemporary.

The hood bulges with the effort to contain the engine. A signature design bit is the new, sequentially firing three-bar LED tail lamps, reminiscent of Aquarian-era Thunderbirds.

For me, though, the main thing is the handling equation. I drove the '09 and '10 GTs around a large auto-cross course, and the cars felt like they were from different planets.

The '09 was exactly as I remember: pitchy, floppy and roll-happy, with lots of nose push and a tendency to multiply rebound energy corner-to-corner until the car was utterly out of shape.

The stroke of genius in the '10 car is the taller, slightly more elastic 50-series Pirelli tires, which first appeared on the Bullitt Mustang last year.

This fraction of additional tire softness allowed the engineers to stiffen and batten down the rest of the suspension—shocks, springs, anti-roll bars—without making the car a miserable paint-shaker to drive. The result is recalibrated magic: great transitional manners, great turn-in, snubbed-down body control, a delicious competence. Axle tramp has gone buh-bye.

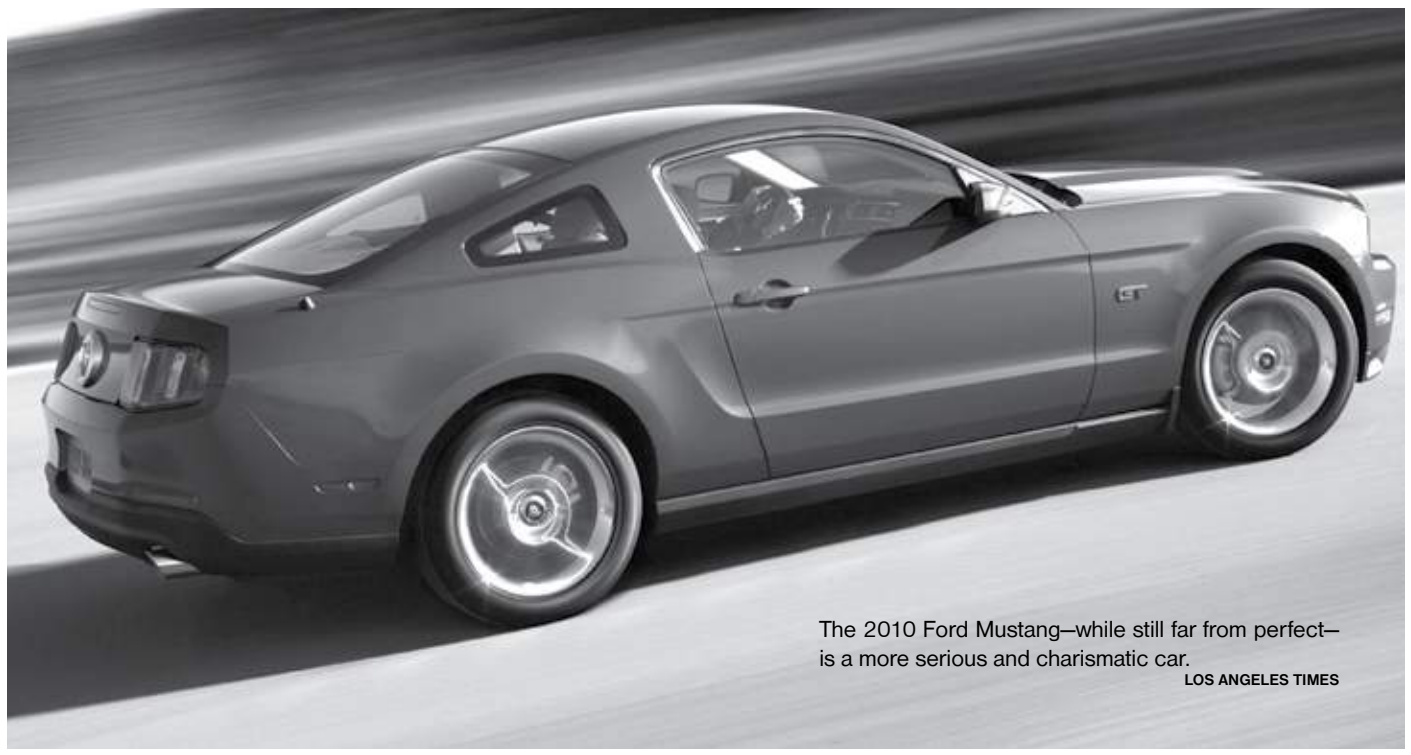
There's lots more to this car, like the special acoustic piping connecting cabin to the engine compartment, the better to hear the 4.6-liter, 315-hp V8's snotty cackle.

There's a three-stage stability control system—AdvanceTrac—which lets you slide the car around like mad before finally stepping in to save your keister. Like I said, stuff you might not be interested in.

What you might find fascinating, though, is that the all-American Mustang, a veritable icon of Motown, isn't quite as washed up as we've been led to believe.

NUTS & BOLTS

BASE PRICE: $28,845
PRICE, AS TESTED: $31,000 (est.)
POWERTRAIN: 4.6-liter, 24-valve, SOHC V8; five-speed manual transmission; rear-wheel drive
HORSEPOWER: 315 at 6,000 rpm
TORQUE: 325 pound-feet at 4,250 rpm
VEHICLE WEIGHT: 3,600 pounds (est.)
0-60 MPH: 5 seconds
WHEELBASE: 107.1 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 188.1 inches
EPA FUEL ECONOMY: 16 miles per gallon city/23 mpg highway (est.)
FINAL THOUGHTS: A better breed of steed



The 2010 Ford Mustang—while still far from perfect—is a more serious and charismatic car.
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Technology to block phones in cars isn't foolproof

By PAUL FOY
AP BUSINESS WRITER

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Many parents would love to be able to give their teenagers a cell phone that couldn't be used while driving. Now some inventors say they have come up with ways to make that possible, but they appear to be relying on wishful thinking.

One product to hit the market, $10-a-month software by Dallas-based WQN Inc., can disable a cell phone while its owner is driving. It uses GPS technology, which can tell how fast a person is traveling. But it can't know whether the person is driving—and therefore it can needlessly lock a phone. WQN, which sells cell phone and Internet security software under the name WebSafety, says it signed up about 50 customers for its first month of service.

Aegis Mobility, a Canadian software company, plans to release a similar Global Positioning System-based product this fall, known as DriveAssistT. Aegis is in talks with big U.S. wireless phone carriers, which would have to support the software and charge families a fee of probably $10 to $20 a month, said David Teater, the company's vice president.

The DriveAssistT system will disable a phone at driving speeds and send a message to callers or texters saying the person they are trying to reach is too busy driving. But because that person could be a non-driving passenger, the approach is a blunt tool.

Other product concepts that don't involve GPS systems have their own flaws. As a result, Parry Aftab, who advises families on technology and safety, suggests worried parents find another way to stop their kids from calling or texting while driving. Parents are better off taking away a child's cell phone if it is used improperly, she said.

ON THE NET
http://www.key2safedriving.net
http://www.websafety.com
http://www.aegismobility.com

"More and more, we see any solution is, in large part, education and awareness, parents getting involved," said Aftab, executive director of WiredSafety.org. Driving and cell phone use can be a bad combination, "but so is putting on makeup and eating a three-course meal," Aftab said. "I wish technology providers would look hard at the problems before coming up with a knee-jerk solution."

Concerns are mounting that driving while gabbing or text-messaging on a cell phone, even if it is not handheld, is unacceptably dangerous. The National Safety Council said this month that there should be a total ban on cell phone use while driving, citing the higher risk of accidents and deaths.

At least 18 states restrict cell phone use—talking or texting—for some or all drivers, according to the insurance industry-funded Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Yet even in those states, motorists and especially young drivers are hardly deterred.

B. Michael Adler, chief executive of WQN, said his 18-year-old son came to mind as he was developing the company's software to disable a cell phone while driving.

"He's texting messages with two hands and driving with his legs," Adler said. "You flip him the keys to the family car, you might as well be flipping him a six-pack of beer."

WQN's surveillance service promises more than just disabling the phone in cars. It can monitor a person's whereabouts, notifying parents by text messaging when their children step out of designated zones or return home. It also can turn off a cell phone at school, preventing cheating by text messaging during classroom tests, based on a reading of the school's location.

The question parents would have to ask themselves is whether they'd want to prohibit their children's activities this way. That kid you're trying to control might not be driving, but rather sitting on a train or a city bus or in the passenger seat of a buddy's car.

Life & Style

Streep, Penn win lead-acting honors at SAG

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Meryl Streep of the Roman Catholic drama "Doubt" and Sean Penn of the Harvey Milk film biography "Milk" won lead-acting honors Sunday at the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

The prize for overall cast went to the rags-to-riches saga "Slumdog Millionaire," while Heath Ledger of Batman blockbuster "The Dark Knight" and Kate Winslet of the Holocaust-themed drama "The Reader" took supporting honors.

"Can I just say there is no such thing as the best actress, there is no such thing as the greatest living actress," said Streep, the Academy Awards record-holder with 15 acting nominations, including one for "Doubt," in which she plays an old-school nun in a war of wills against a progressive priest.

"I am in a position where I have secret information, that I know this to be true," she said. "I am so in awe of the work of the women this year—nominated, not nominated—so proud of us girls. And everybody wins when we get parts like this."

Penn played gay-rights political pioneer Milk but said the film had a universal theme.

"As actors, we don't play gay, straight. We don't play any of these kinds (of roles). We play human beings, and this movie is something that all of us involved are so proud of," Penn said. "This is a story about equal rights for all human beings."

Ledger's supporting-actor prize for his sociopathic reinvention of Batman bad guy the Joker put the late actor a step closer to becoming just the second performer to win a posthumous Academy Award. The first was Peter Finch, the best-actor recipient for 1976's "Network."

The award was accepted by "The Dark Knight" co-star Gary Oldman.

"I'm quite emotional," Oldman said. "It is a great honor to be asked to accept this on behalf of Heath. He was an extraordinary young man with an extraordinary talent, and it is wonderful that you have acknowledged that and honored that talent tonight."

Oscar buzz has been flying over Ledger's performance since before his death just over a year ago from an accidental overdose of prescription drugs. With the SAG win and the Golden Globe, Ledger now looks like a virtual lock to receive the supporting-actor Oscar on Feb. 22.

Winslet offered a tribute to the late Anthony Minghella and Sydney Pollack, both producers on "The Reader," and said 2008 was a fabulous year for films.

"It's really an honor to be included in what I think is such a remarkable year," Winslet said. "I really feel like everybody should be given a medal."

The role already earned Winslet the same prize at the Golden Globes, where she also won lead dramatic actress for "Revolutionary Road." But at the Oscars, Winslet has just one nomination, as lead actress for "The Reader," in which she plays a former concentration camp guard.

As it did at the Golden Globes, "30 Rock" swept the TV comedy honors, Tina Fey and Alec Baldwin taking the individual acting prizes and the show winning the ensemble cast award.

Fey, creator and star of the series set behind the scenes at a sketch-comedy show, lobbed a wisecrack at Hollywood producers, who have battled Hollywood trade guilds over actors, writers and others' share of potential profits from Web programming.

Joking that one day, her young daughter would be old enough to watch reruns of "30 Rock" on the Internet, Fey said: "She'll look up at me and say, `What do you mean, you don't get residuals for this?'"

Hugh Laurie, who won his second straight SAG prize for best actor in a TV drama for the medical show "House," joked that he was disappointed one of his fellow nominees did not win.

"I actually had a hundred dollars on James Spader (of "Boston Legal")," Laurie said. "This is just not my night."

Sally Field earned the TV drama actress award for the family series "Brothers & Sisters," while the advertising saga "Mad Men" was named best drama show. Accepting alongside his cast mates, "Mad Men" star Jon Hamm had kind words for the show's "dozen of viewers."

Before the show, "The Dark Knight" won SAG's honor for best movie stunt ensemble, while "Heroes" took the same prize for television.

James Earl Jones was honored with the guild's lifetime-achievement award for a career that included roles in "Dr. Strangelove," "Field of Dreams," "Cry, the Beloved Country" and "The Man," in which he played the first black U.S. president.

The ceremony featured clips highlighting Jones' rumbling bass voice as the mouthpiece of "Star Wars" villain Darth Vader, the noble patriarch in "The Lion King," even cable news with his "This is CNN" announcements.

"I want to thank you for all the work that you do," Jones told the audience, quoting the Book of Genesis on how God breathed life into man. "I don't mean to embarrass anybody by comparing the actor to God, but once we've taken the role, we have a similar responsibility to breathe life into that role, and only the actor can do that."

AP

Actress Anne Hathaway arrives at the 15th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009, in Los Angeles.

WINNERS' LIST

MOVIES:
- **Cast**: "Slumdog Millionaire."
- **Actor in a leading role**: Sean Penn, "Milk."
- **Actress in a leading role**: Meryl Streep, "Doubt."
- **Supporting actor**: Heath Ledger, "The Dark Knight."
- **Supporting actress**: Kate Winslet, "The Reader."
- **Stunt ensemble**: "The Dark Knight."

TELEVISION:
- **Drama series cast**: "Mad Men."
- **Actor in a drama series**: Hugh Laurie, "House."
- **Actress in a drama series**: Sally Field, "Brothers & Sisters."
- **Comedy series cast**: "30 Rock."
- **Actor in a comedy series**: Alec Baldwin, "30 Rock."
- **Actress in a comedy series**: Tina Fey, "30 Rock."
- **Actor in a movie or miniseries**: Paul Giamatti, "John Adams."
- **Actress in a movie or miniseries**: Laura Linney, "John Adams."
- **Stunt ensemble**: "Heroes

LIFE ACHIEVEMENT: James Earl Jones.

A *view from inside the* SAG Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Hundreds of stars toasted their peers at the 15th annual Screen Actors Guild Awards. AP Entertainment Writer Sandy Cohen reports from the trophy table inside the Shrine Auditorium.

◆ ◆ ◆

■ Meryl Streep's trophy for best-actress in a film stood alone on the table at the end of the ceremony. The winner for her performance in "Doubt" signed her name and said, "I don't know what I signed."

■ "We each get our own award!?" an incredulous Dev Patel exclaimed after the "Slumdog Millionaire" ensemble won for outstanding cast in a motion picture. He was even more excited when he was told that the children in the film would also receive trophies. "They're all going to have one of these in Mumbai?! They don't even weigh as much as this!"

■ Lifetime achievement honoree James Earl Jones stopped backstage to chat with Forest Whitaker, who presented the award to the legendary star of theater, film and television. "We haven't talked for a long time," said Jones, who saluted the late Paul Newman during his acceptance speech.

■ Winners had to sign for their trophies backstage, but Hugh Laurie seemed a bit confused by the process after the "House" leading man won his award for male actor in a drama series. "So this just goes on my credit card, right?" he joked as he signed his name.

■ Sally Field was caught off-guard when she won the award for female actor in a drama series ("Brothers & Sisters"). Field said she was chatting and having a glass of wine at her table in the audience when she won. "I have a habit of doing things people talk about, so I have to think," she said backstage, clutching the winner's envelope with her name inside.

■ Kate Winslet still hadn't caught her breath when she went backstage after winning the supporting-actress prize Sunday for her performance as a former concentration camp guard in "The Reader." "I'm too emotional to lose and too emotional to win. I need lessons in awards season," said Winslet, who won double at the Golden Globes earlier this month for her roles in "Revolutionary Road" and "The Reader" and is nominated for an Oscar.

■ Tracy Morgan entered the trophy area, talking on his phone and sharing the news that "30 Rock" swept the TV comedy honors, including the ensemble cast award. Then, he claimed his prize from the table and was wowed by its weight. "This is heavy," he said. "It's good hardware. It's the first thing I've ever won in my life." Then, to no one in particular, he added, "I think I won musical chairs one time in kindergarten."

■ The ceremony had started, but the trophy table wasn't set up backstage yet. Tuxedoed workers arranged more than a dozen trophies—those hefty bronze statuettes that weigh 12 pounds each—on a long table covered with a black cloth while the night's first awards (female and male actor in a comedy series) were being announced.

Stars dish at SAG Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A look at what the stars said backstage and on the red carpet at the Screen Actors Guild Awards:

KING OF THE WORLD: "Slumdog Millionaire" actor Dev Patel ran into his first love on the red carpet: Kate Winslet. "It's surreal. I mean, walking down the red carpet today, I see people who have been winning Oscars since before I even contemplated being an actor," he said backstage. "She was like my first love, Kate Winslet. And she knew who I was."

LEARNING CURVE: For James Franco, working on "Milk" was not only a professional thrill but also a learning experience. "I grew up in the Bay Area, where all these events took place, and I was never taught anything about (gay rights activist Harvey) Milk or who he was, so... I can't expect the rest of the world to know. That's the most important thing," he said.

STRIKING OUT: Holly Hunter said on the red carpet before the show that actors come to the SAG Awards to support the union, which has struggled internally over leadership and a possible strike authorization vote. "One of the great powers of the union—any union—is the ability to strike," Hunter said. "And I support them."

FAMILY AFFAIR: Anne Hathaway, who is nominated for an Academy Award for her role in "Rachel Getting Married," said she is "trying to keep a healthy perspective" about awards season—and that meant spending Oscar nomination morning at her parents' house. "I figured I'd be crying either way," she said, "so it would be good to be with mommy and daddy."

MAKING AN ENTRANCE: Tracey Ullman said she spent her time on the red carpet spotting stars. "It's great fun. You see who's had work done," she joked. "You see what thespians are aging, who aren't. We just stopped around the corner for a Starbucks, and half the people are in their limos at Starbucks just circling because no one wants to arrive too early."

Meryl Streep poses backstage with the award for outstanding performance by a female actor in a leading role for "Doubt" at the 15th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009, in Los Angeles.

AP

Carter Center auction in Fla. to raise funds

ATLANTA (AP)—The Carter Center plans to auction original artworks by former President Jimmy Carter, a baseball autographed by five U.S. presidents, a set of Harry Potter books signed by author J.K. Rowling and other celebrity memorabilia next month.

They're among more than 100 high-end tchotchkes from the White House, sports, the space race and the entertainment world, plus luxury vacations—including one with the former president and his wife—for sale during Carter Center's annual Winter Weekend celebration Feb. 7 in Port St. Lucie, Fla.

Proceeds will help support the work of the not-for-profit Carter Center, which promotes peace and health worldwide and monitors elections in struggling democracies.

Last year, the highest bid was $300,000 for a bench of hard maple wood hand-crafted by Carter. The 2008 auction brought in a total of $1.2 million, Carter Center spokeswoman Paige Rohe said Thursday.

Event coordinator Jay Beck said, "We've averaged, in the last several years, about a million dollars at the auction. In this current economy, I don't now how things will be."

Carter Center supporters donated many of the items. They include the Rawlings baseball, valued at $5,000, from a benefactor who had it signed by Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Carter over the years.

Six original paintings by Carter, mostly featuring still life and scenes of his native Georgia, are valued collectively at $100,000, according to the auction catalog. Five are oils and one is acrylic.

There is a certificate commemorating the 40th anniversary on July 21 of the first moon landing, signed by Buzz Aldrin, Michael Collins and Neil Armstrong. There also are photographs taken on the moon and signed by the astronauts.

For music lovers, there are guitars bearing the signatures of rock musicians, including David Crosby, Stephen Stills, and Graham Nash; Sheryl Crow; Willie Nelson; Michael Stipe, Mike Mills, and Peter Buck of REM; Bruce Springsteen and Kid Rock.

A Rodriguez guitar, handmade and donated by the guitar-making family, is valued at $50,000.

In addition to vacations in places such as Florence, Italy, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, there is a fishing trip with Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter to the Brigadoon Lodge in north Georgia, considered a top fly fishing destination.

Online bidding will be available for both the live and silent components of the auction.

Exactly 1 year after death, Ledger's legacy grows

NEW YORK (AP)—Last year's Oscar nominations day was tragic. This year's was bittersweet.

It was exactly one year ago Thursday when Heath Ledger was found dead in a New York apartment, just hours after the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences had announced its nominees. Outside the Soho building, a makeshift memorial of flowers and candles quickly accumulated.

The academy paid its own tribute to the actor Thursday by nominating him for best supporting actor, honoring his mad, incendiary performance as the Joker in "The Dark Knight."

"Today was the day," said Josh Brolin, who last year was celebrating the Oscar success of "No Country for Old Men" when the news on Ledger broke. "It was a very sad day. I knew Heath loosely. I think it's a great performance. It's a very bittersweet thing."

"The Dark Knight" earned eight nominations in total, but was shut out of other major award categories. Ledger's nomination, though, came as expected.

Ledger, who died of an accidental overdose of prescription drugs at the age of 28, was nominated along with Brolin ("Milk"), Robert Downey Jr. ("Tropic Thunder"), Philip Seymour Hoffman ("Doubt") and Michael Shannon ("Revolutionary Road").

Many expect Ledger to win when the awards are handed out Feb. 22, which would make him only the second actor to posthumously win an Oscar following Peter Finch in 1976's "Network."

Other actors have been nominated after their deaths, though: Massimo Troisi (1994's "The Postman"), Spencer Tracy (1967's "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner"), Ralph Richardson, (1984's "Greystroke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes"), Jeanne Eagles (1929's "The Letter") and James Dean (twice, for 1955's "East of Eden and 1956's "Giant").

At the time of Ledger's death, comparisons to Dean were rife—and perhaps always will be. Both were young, provocative talents snuffed out just as they were reaching full expression. But since "The Dark Knight" was released, Ledger seemed to make a mythology of his own.

A groundswell of acclaim and sentiment has coalesced around his performance. When the Golden Globes awarded him best supporting actor, the crowd stood in applause—the first standing-O of the night—as "Dark Knight" director Christopher Nolan accepted the award for Ledger.

"That really hit us in the heart, you know?" his father, Kim Ledger, later said of the ovation. "I just really wish our boy was here to see that."

At the podium, Nolan said he and those who worked on "The Dark Knight" accepted the award "with an awful mixture of sadness but incredible pride. After Heath passed, you saw a hole ripped in the future of cinema."

Ledger's mother, Sally Bell, has said his Golden Globe would be given to his 3-year-old daughter Matilda.

"I just saw `The Dark Knight,'" said Richard Jenkins, nominated for best actor for his performance in "The Visitor." "He's extraordinary in it. I think the response that his win got at the Golden Globes is kind of how everyone feels. He was a brilliant, brilliant actor."

AP

In this Nov. 6, 2006, file photo, actor Heath Ledger arrives to the premiere of "Candy" in New York.

A spokeswoman for Warner Bros. said Nolan and others from "The Dark Knight" would not have reaction to the nominations. A spokeswoman for actress Michelle Williams, the mother of Ledger's daughter, said Williams would also not be commenting on Ledger's nomination.

Ledger's family was to hold a brief press conference in Perth, Australia on Friday morning.

It's the second Oscar nomination for Ledger, who was nominated for best actor in 2006 for his performance as a gruff-voiced, gay cowboy in "Brokeback Mountain." Before the Joker came along, it was his most indelible role. He lost the Oscar to Philip Seymour Hoffman ("Capote").

Ledger's Hollywood career essentially started with the romantic comedy "10 Things I Hate About You" and continued with Mel Gibson's "The Patriot" and the medieval adventure "A Knight's Tale." But Ledger began gravitating more toward indie fare, like "Monster's Ball," "Lords of Dogtown" and "The Brothers Grimm."

In 2007, he played one of many Bob Dylans in the unusual biopic "I'm Not There." Ledger's musical side will also be posthumously displayed on an upcoming album paying tribute to singer-songwriter Nick Drake. On it, Ledger covers "Black Eyed Dog," which he recorded in 2007 for an art installation.

Ledger's posthumous on-screen life isn't over yet, either. He died while in the midst of production on "The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus," which re-teamed him with "Brothers Grimm" director Terry Gilliam.

After Ledger's death, Gilliam had to shut down "Dr. Parnassus" and the film's future was in doubt since Ledger was a key performer in a film that had much still to shoot.

But Gilliam and writer Charles McKeown rewrote the script (it's about a journey through the imagination via a magic mirror) so that the part could be played by not one, but a group of actors. Jude Law, Johnny Depp and Colin Farrell all joined to round out the part.

Gilliam has insisted Ledger was clean of illegal drugs at the time of his death, but rather was suffering from insomnia. The director is currently cutting "Dr. Parnassus," which doesn't yet have a release date.

Whatever might still be seen of Ledger's work, though, a sense of loss was pervasive on the anniversary of his death.

"He would have been nominated either way. It has nothing to do with his passing," said Ron Howard, who was nominated for directing "Frost/Nixon." It's a great piece of acting, and I, as a creative person, feel cheated in knowing I'll never have the opportunity to work with him."

Message of Appreciation

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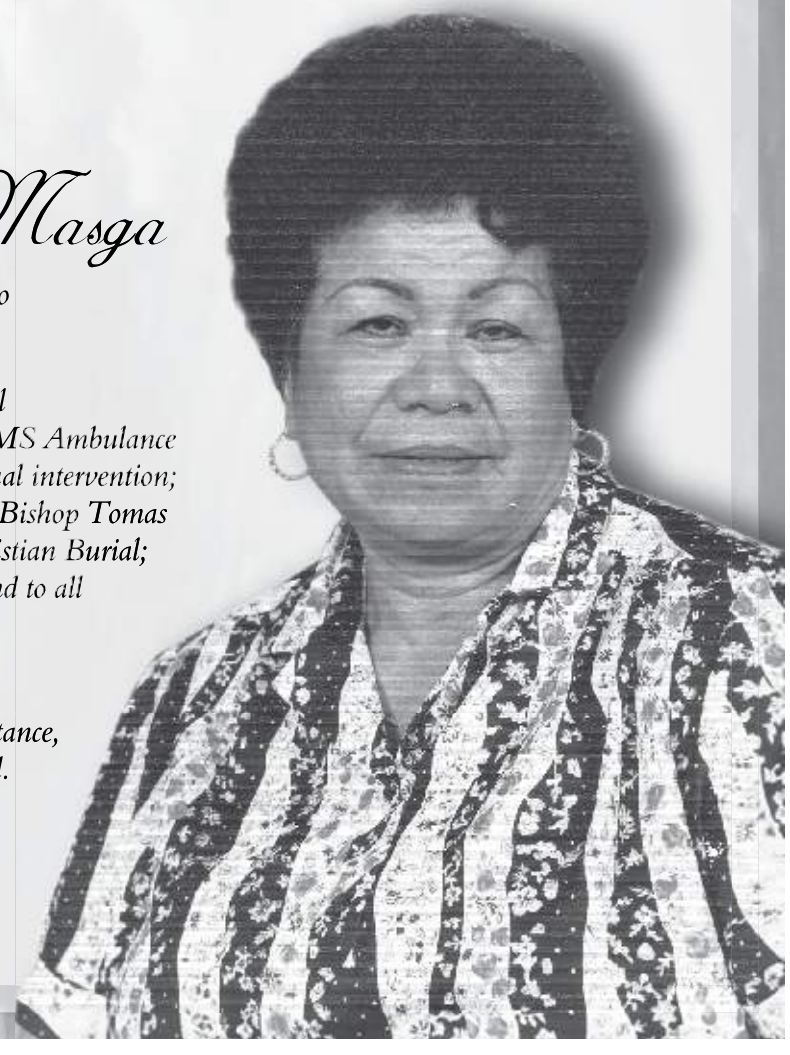
Words cannot express our true feeling of appreciation to all who have reached out to us in any way.

We are forever grateful to the doctors & nurses for their medical intervention at CHC and most especially the staff of the ICU Ward, and EMS Ambulance Services for their compassionate and quality care; to the priests for their spiritual intervention; and to the Techa, Mrs. Isabel Tenorio, for leading the rosary every night; to Bishop Tomas Camacho, Fr. Charlie and the clergy concelebrants at the Mass of the Christian Burial; St. Jude Friends Choir, Music Coordinator Margret T. Cabrera; and to all who came to the wake, especially those present at the mass, we are indeed humbled by your presence.

Lastly, to all families and friends who unselfishly offered their assistance, condolences, monetary gifts, and prayers, we are deeply touched.

Thank You all and may God continue to bless you.

Masga Children and Families



‘Paul Blart: Mall Cop’ keeps top box office spot

LOS ANGELES (AP)—“Paul Blart: Mall Cop” wasn’t ready to turn over his box-office badge this weekend as the film about a bumbling shopping center security guard earned $21.5 million to nab No. 1 for a second week in a row.

The comedy, starring Kevin James as the guard who tries to protect the mall where he works from criminals, has now grossed $64.8 million in its two weeks of release and appears on its way to surpass $100 million.

“It’s just a very funny film,” said Rory Bruer, president of worldwide distribution for Sony. “It’s not only a great family film, it really is a film that everyone loves.”

The third installment of the “Underworld” series fared well in its opening weekend. “Underworld: Rise of the Lycans,” a prequel that looks at the roots of a feud between vampires and werewolves, made $20.7 million. Its two predecessors—“Underworld” and “Underworld: Evolution”—earned $21.7 million and $26.8 million, respectively, in their opening weekends.

1. “**Paul Blart: Mall Cop**,” $21.5 million.
2. “**Underworld**: Rise of the Lycans,” $20.7 million.
3. “**Gran Torino**,” $16 million.
4. “**Hotel for Dogs,**” $12.4 million.
5. “**Slumdog Millionaire**,” $10.6 million.
6. “**My Bloody Valentine** 3-D,” $10.1 million.
7. “**Inkheart**,” $7.7 million.
8. “**Bride Wars**,” $7 million.
9. “**The Curious Case of Benjamin Button**,” $6 million.
10. “**Notorious**,” $5.7 million.

AP

In this image released by Sony Pictures, Bernie McInerney, left, and Kevin James and shown in the comedy, “Paul Blart: Mall Cop.”

The fantasy adventure “Inkheart” was unable to cast a spell over movie-goers, earning only $7.7 million in its debut. The movie, taken from the best-selling novel by Cornelia Funke, features Brendan Fraser playing a bookbinder with the ability to read characters right out of books and into real life.

“Unfortunately, families didn’t come out in larger numbers,” said Jeff Goldstein, Warner Bros.’ executive vice president of distribution.

Films that received Academy Award nominations this past week had a strong showing at the box office as studios expanded their release.

“Slumdog Millionaire,” the drama about a game-show contestant from the slums of Mumbai, earned $10.6 million this weekend as the movie appeared in more than 1,400 theaters. Studio executives said the film, which has now made nearly $56 million, has been boosted by its recent haul of awards, including top honors from the Producers Guild of America on Saturday.

“I think the word of mouth has been very strong since we opened in November, but with the Golden Globes and the Academy Award nominations as well as the PGA, it’s the must-see movie before the Academy Awards in February,” said Sheila DeLoach, senior vice president of distribution at Fox Searchlight.

“The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” re-entered the Top 10, earning $6 million to boost its total to $111 million. The film, starring Brad Pitt as a man aging backward toward infancy, landed 13 Oscar nominations, including best actor for Pitt. “The Wrestler” and “Frost/Nixon” also drew big crowds this weekend.

“This group has gotten the biggest (Oscar) bump collectively that I’ve ever seen,” said Paul Dergarabedian, president of the box-office tracker Media by Numbers. “This lays to rest the argument that Oscar nominations can’t help out your box-office numbers.”

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Media By Numbers LLC. Final figures will be released Monday.

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Underworld 3: Rise of the Lycans
Friday 4:10 7:10 9:40
Saturday 1:15 4:10 7:10 9:40
Sunday 1:15 4:10 7:10
Mon and Tues 4:10 7:10
Michael Sheen, Bill Nighy
Thriller, Romance • Rated R
Synopsis
Depicts the origins of the centuries-long blood feud between two powerful and immortal tribes, the aristocratic Vampires, known as Death Dealers, and the barbaric Lycans, a line of fierce werewolves.

Inkheart
Friday 4:05 7:25 9:45
Saturday 1:20 4:05 7:25 9:45
Sunday 1:20 4:05 7:25
Mon and Tues 4:05 7:25
Brendan Fraser, Helen Mirren
Adventure, Fantasy • Rated PG
Synopsis
Mortimer “Mo” Folchart and his 12-year-old daughter, Meggie, share a passion for books. What they also share is an extraordinary gift for bringing characters from books to life when they read aloud. But there is a danger: when a character is brought to life from a book, a real person disappears into its pages. On one of their trips to a secondhand book shop, Mo hears voices he hasn’t heard for years, and when he locates the book they’re coming from, it sends a shiver up his spine.

★ ★ ★

Paul Blart, Mall Cop
Friday 4:20 7:05 10:00
Saturday 1:05 4:20 7:05 10:00
Sunday 1:05 4:20 7:05
Mon and Tues 4:20 7:05
Kevin James, Jayma Mays
Comedy • Rated PG
Synopsis
A single, suburban dad tries to make ends meet as a security officer at a New Jersey mall. It’s a job he takes very seriously, though no one else does. When Santa’s helpers at the mall stage a coup, shutting down the megaplex and taking hostages (Paul’s daughter and sweetheart among them), Jersey’s most formidable mall cop will have to become a real cop to save the day.

My Bloody Valentine
Friday 4:30 7:15 9:55
Saturday 1:25 4:30 7:15 9:55
Sunday 1:25 4:30 7:15
Mon and Tues 4:30 7:15
Jaime King, Tom Atkins
Horror • Rated R

Hotel For Dogs
Friday 4:00 7:00 9:35
Saturday 1:00 4:00 7:00 9:35
Sunday 1:00 4:00 7:00
Mon and Tues 4:00 7:00
Emma Roberts, Don Cheadle
Comedy, Children • Rated PG

Bride Wars
Friday 4:15 7:30 9:30
Saturday 1:10 4:15 7:30 9:30
Sunday 1:10 4:15 7:30
Mon and Tues 4:15 7:30
Kate Hudson, Anne Hathaway
Romantic Comedy • Rated PG

Unborn
Friday 4:25 7:20 9:50
Saturday 1:30 4:25 7:20 9:50
Sunday 1:30 4:25 7:20
Mon and Tues 4:25 7:20
Gary Oldman, Odette Yustman
Thriller, Supernatural • Rated PG 13

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AP

Members of the cast of “Slumdog Millionaire” pose backstage with the award for outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture during the 15th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009, in Los Angeles. From left are, Dev Patel, Irrfan Khan, Freida Pinto and Anil Kapoor.

‘Slumdog Millionaire’ snags top producer award

LOS ANGELES (AP)—”Slumdog Millionaire” scored the top award from the Producers Guild of America on Saturday, building more momentum for the rags-to-riches drama in the Oscar race for best picture.

The film, a gritty yet heartwarming drama about a game-show contestant from the slums of Mumbai, beat out “Milk,” “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” “The Dark Knight” and “Frost/Nixon.”

Producer Christian Colson was honored with the Darryl F. Zanuck producer of the year award at the ceremony, held at the Hollywood Palladium, the latest Hollywood kudofest in the run-up to the Academy Awards next month.

“Slumdog Millionaire” swept up four Golden Globe awards earlier this month. Directed by Briton Danny Boyle and starring a cast of unknowns, the film is a leading contender for the Academy Award’s best picture. It also snared Oscar nominations for best director and adapted screenplay.

In television, HBO series “John Adams” snagged the David L. Wolper producer of the year award for long-form TV while AMC’s “Mad Men” took the prize for drama.

Two shows were repeat winners from last year. In the comedy TV category, “30 Rock” was honored, while “The Colbert Report” was lauded in live entertainment/competition TV.

In other categories, “Wall-E” won in animated motion pictures, “Man on Wire” in documentaries and CBS’ “60 Minutes” in nonfiction television.

Career achievement awards were bestowed on producer Brian Grazer, actor/director/producer Ron Howard, actor/producer Michael Douglas and “The Sopranos” producer David Chase.

A year into return, Don Imus has changed

NEW YORK (AP)—Don Imus makes no excuses for his offensive remarks about the Rutgers women's basketball team, but says: "I deserved a second chance."

He's 14 months into that second chance, trying to make the most of it. The new "Imus in the Morning" has key differences from the old one in tone and is certainly different visually, with the addition of two comedians who are black, Karith Foster and Tony Powell.

"What happened is what should have happened," Imus said in an interview. "So much good has come out of what happened. I really do think it's like an alcoholic, which I am, and a drug addict, which I am. You're presented with the unique opportunity to be a better person than you had been. I consider this situation to be analogous to that, almost identical to that."

Imus, 68, works now for the ABC Radio Networks and rural RFD-TV after being fired by CBS Radio and MSNBC in spring 2007 for referring to the Rutgers women as "nappy-headed hos."

His show has the same mixture of interviews and cantankerous commentary on what he calls the "freak show," the world of politics and media. Imus will still call someone an idiot—some guests consider it a rite of passage—and he and his cast ride each other mercilessly.

Although NBC News cut him loose, both top NBC anchor Brian Williams and chief White House correspondent Chuck Todd appeared on Imus' show during the past two weeks. The hard-edged, ethnically based humor is largely gone; Imus said he had felt pressure from his old bosses to be more shocking, like Howard Stern or Opie & Anthony. The innocents, like women basketball players who didn't ask or deserve to be part of his world, are now off-limits.

One of his bosses, RFD chief executive Patrick Gottsch, described the changes simply: "He's not making stupid remarks anymore."

RFD is a step down for Imus. The young network is in less than half the homes as MSNBC and isn't on big-city cable systems in the Northeast, and Imus' primary appeal is in the Northeast corridor.

But he's not doing a TV show, just simulcasting a radio show. After early indications that the enforced layoff cost him listeners, Imus is approaching the average of 2.25 million people who tune it at least once a week, about what it was before, said Michael Harrison, publisher of the trade journal Talkers magazine.

AP

In this Dec. 3, 2007 file photo, radio personality Don Imus addresses the audience at New York's Town Hall during his return to radio.

Harrison estimates that Imus is on about the same or even more radio stations than he was before. While Harrison said his influence has dwindled—"you don't hear about him as much as you did"—last fall's Imus-curated CD benefiting his ranch for young cancer patients was a surprise best-seller.

Dennis Baxter, who runs KCAA radio in San Bernardino, Calif., brought back Imus' show last year, but only after talking with members of the local black community about how it might be received. He finds the show much the same, but said Imus is "a little bit toned down" and "a little more respectful of people."

"He's not going over the edge maybe as much," Baxter said.

Imus, who talked one day recently in a Manhattan office, resists the idea that he has less of an edge.

"In some cases we do stuff that's more edgy," he said. "There are things that are said on the program that would not be said if we didn't have two African-Americans there. As far as the cruder material, that is the stuff we have eliminated totally."

He said his biggest concern coming back was how people would treat Foster and Powell.

"I was afraid that some people would think that they were there to serve as some kind of racial cover for me, which was not the case," he said. "They were there because they should have been there before."

Foster, who saw the job as a good opportunity and believed Imus was genuinely contrite, said she had the same concern about how she'd be seen. She even worried about whether she'd have to hire security.

"I can represent myself," she said. "I know I'm not anybody's token." She said Imus has kept his word on talking about race; the Obama candidacy has led to several discussions about whether it truly meant equality was at hand. Then there's the less high-brow topics, like the abuse she took Friday about her Chihuahua.

A week ago Debra J. Dickerson, author of "The End of Blackness," was on the show to talk about a collection of essays from black authors. She'll be on again soon to discuss black history month. It's pretty safe to assume neither appearance would have been booked three years ago.

Dickerson, who wrote an anti-Imus essay for Time magazine after the Rutgers comments, was angry to get a call from an Imus producer asking her to be a guest for black history month a year ago. But urged by the students she was teaching in a college journalism class, she decided to accept the gig.

She bet her students a box of doughnuts that Rutgers wouldn't come up. She lost. Imus wanted to talk about it.

"There are very few people in public life who have taken responsibility the way Imus has," Dickerson said.

Still, she said she gets very little feedback from friends who are black when she's on the show. To her, it indicates many have written Imus off, if they cared about him to begin with.

Al Sharpton, one of Imus' most visible critics during the Rutgers controversy, didn't respond to requests to talk about him.

Since his return, Imus said he's had no one he asked to come on the show turn him down—although he didn't ask people he knew wouldn't do it.

Despite owning up to his mistake, he called the media reaction to it absurd. About his critics: "I didn't expect to see any profiles in courage from any of these people and I didn't.'

"Are there some people who, if I was given an opportunity to get even with them, would I?" he said. "Of course. But I'm not going out of my way."

Report: Prince Harry splits from girlfriend

LONDON (AP)—A British tabloid newspaper is reporting that Prince Harry and his longtime girlfriend have broken up.

The News of the World reported on its Web site Saturday that the prince, 24, and Chelsy Davy decided to split up after a series of talks last week. Harry, third in line to the throne, began training to become an Army helicopter pilot earlier this month. He and Davy, a 23-year-old law student, had been dating for about five years, the paper said.

Prince Harry's office at St. James's Palace said there would be no comment on the report.

Zsa Zsa Gabor may have lost money in Madoff scheme

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A lawyer for Zsa Zsa Gabor says the 91-year-old actress may have lost as much as $10 million invested with accused swindler Bernard Madoff. Chris Fields said Sunday that forensics accountants looking into the missing millions believe they were invested with Madoff through a third-party money manager.

He says the loss was noticed about a week ago when Gabor's husband Frederic von Anhalt was checking on the couple's finances. Madoff is estimated to have duped investors out of as much as $50 billion in a large-scale Ponzi scheme. Potential victims include several high-profile New Yorkers and Hollywood figures.

The deadline for prosecutors to deliver a formal indictment of Madoff is Feb. 11.

Teenager is running scared while shoplifting for mom

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: I am 13 and in eighth grade. I love my mom very much, but lately I'm worried about the things she makes me do for her. She takes me to the mall and makes me steal clothes, jewelry and household items.

I don't want to disappoint my mom, but I'm afraid I'll get caught and get in trouble with the law. What should I do?

SHOPLIFTING FOR MOM

DEAR SHOPLIFTING: What your mother is doing is a form of child abuse. You are a smart girl, and you can have a bright future. It will, however, become much harder for you if you are arrested for shoplifting. That is why I am urging you to talk about this with a counselor or trusted teacher at school. You need more help right now than anyone can give you in a letter. Please don't put it off because I am worried about you.

DEAR ABBY: My husband, "Kirk," and I have been married for 12 years. About a year ago we moved overseas because my husband is in the military. Before the move, Kirk was gone for a year, and I became very independent because I had to do everything myself. We had had some problems before, but since the move they have gotten worse.

We don't talk or even stay in the same room for very long. Kirk treats me like a roommate and hasn't touched me in more than a year. I have tried to talk to him about this, but all I get is, "I don't know what I want."

Abby, he makes it sound like it's all my fault. To say the least, this causes me stress and I end up yelling at our kids, which isn't fair to them. Please help me because I don't know what to do.

UNHAPPY MILITARY WIFE

DEAR UNHAPPY WIFE: Your marriage is in serious trouble, and it won't improve unless you and your husband can find a safe place in which you can communicate frankly and honestly. An excellent place to start would be by talking to the chaplain on the base where your husband is stationed. If your husband won't go with you, then go alone.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: When I was 20 and in an abusive marriage, I had an affair with a much older man I'll call "Ben." Ben promised he would take me away from the pain, and we both left our respective partners.

Twenty years later, Ben's ex-wife is still bitter about their divorce. Although Ben and I are no longer together, I feel the need to apologize to her for my role in ending their marriage. I admit I did some nasty things to her when she expressed her vindictiveness over the years.

I am now married with children and lead a very different life, and I'm ashamed of my behavior back then. I want to accept accountability for what I did and give her the chance to address me. I don't think she will be receptive, but for her to still carry this anger 20 years later—and never to have remarried—validates that I have caused her much pain.

Should I write her, call her or just put it behind me once and for all?

REMORSEFUL IN GEORGIA

DEAR REMORESEFUL: If I understand you correctly, what you want is to lessen your guilt by letting this woman tell you how deeply hurt she was that you helped to destroy her marriage. I can see the benefit for YOU, but how will it benefit her besides dredging up all the pain and anger you caused her? Will it ease either one? I doubt it. Nor will it cause her to remarry or to think better of you.

Better to let the scab stay in place rather than pick at it and concentrate on finding another avenue for redeeming yourself.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone—teens to seniors—is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

LOOK AT ALL THIS HOMEWORK I'M SUPPOSED TO DO!
I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS GARBAGE! I WANT TO GO PLAY OUTSIDE!
CHILDHOOD IS SHORT AND MATURITY IS FOREVER.
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Garfield®

By Jim Davis

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Text GARFIELD to 22646 US ONLY
I DON'T LIKE TO INTERRUPT ODIE WHEN HE'S DEEP IN LACK OF THOUGHT
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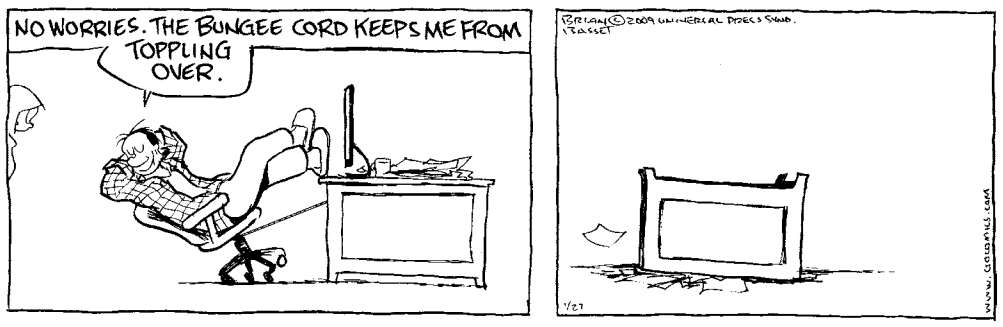
1-27

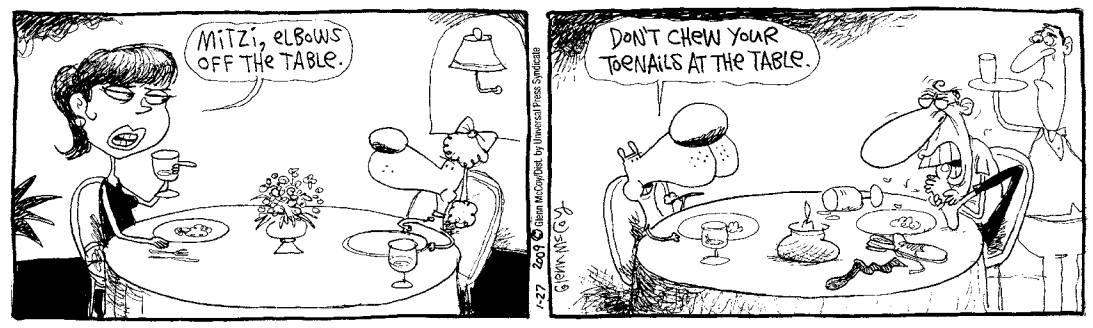
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Wide gap
5 Sleep phenom
8 Jerry Herman heroine
12 Culture medium
13 401(k) alternative
14 Surrounded by
15 Force the inclusion of
17 Ding follower
18 Consume
19 Detachable shirt front
21 Sacred song
24 Houston acronym
25 Uncomplicated
26 Lively folk dance
30 Detergent brand
31 "I see"
32 N.J. neighbor
33 "Hush!"
35 Witnesses
36 Shark variety
37 Journalist Alexander
38 Overnight flight
41 Seek damages
42 Finished
43 File transfer
48 Cherry type
49 NAFTA signatory
50 TV handyman Bob
51 Otherwise
52 Prizefighter
53 Verve

DOWN
1 Tank fill
2 "Yecch!"
3 Southeast Asian
4 At will
5 Laugh-a-minute
6 Blunder
7 Kind of orange or collar
8 Wild and crazy
9 Wild and crazy
10 "Dibs!"
11 Nervous
16 Scenery chewer
20 "— It Romantic?"
21 Incubator sound
22 Ganges garment
23 Without delay, on a memo
24 "— People" (Frank Loesser song)
26 Installed
27 Notion
28 Hammerhead part
29 "Born Free" lioness
31 Aussie's greeting
34 Come out
35 Put aside
37 Baltimore newspaper
38 Judicial garb
39 Satanic
40 Lairs
41 Booty
44 Buck-eyes' sch.
45 Tin Man's need
46 Carte lead-in
47 Sportscaster Dierdorf

Solution time: 21 mins.

J	O	G	■	S	A	B	E	R	■	W	A	Y
A	V	A	■	A	M	I	N	E	■	I	R	A
B	A	Y	W	I	N	D	O	W	■	N	E	W
■	■	■	A	L	E	■	C	R	E	T	A	N
G	L	I	D	E	S	■	H	A	T	E	■	■
A	I	R	■	D	I	E	■	P	U	R	R	S
P	E	W	S	■	A	S	S	■	I	S	A	O
S	N	I	P	S	■	P	I	C	■	E	C	U
■	■	N	O	T	E	■	L	A	T	T	E	R
H	O	S	T	E	L	■	E	R	A	■	■	■
U	G	H	■	W	I	N	N	E	B	A	G	O
B	R	A	■	E	D	U	C	E	■	L	O	P
S	E	W	■	D	E	T	E	R	■	I	T	S

Yesterday's answer 1-27

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12				■	13			■	14			
15				16				■	17			
■	■	■	18			■	19	20				
21	22	23			■	24				■	■	■
25				■	26					27	28	29
30			■	31					■	32		
33			34					■	35			
■	■	■	36				■	37				
38	39	40				■	41			■	■	■
42				■	43	44				45	46	47
48				■	49			■	50			
51				■	52			■	53			

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Tamlyn Tomita, 43; Alan Cumming, 44; Bridget Fonda, 45; Cris Collinsworth, 50

Happy Birthday: Look to the future with optimism. You can expand some of your interests and trendy ideas from the past. Utilize the old by recycling and adapting whatever you can to work now. Your broad outlook will baffle some but ultimately will make you a hero. Your numbers are 7, 10, 16, 21, 24, 33, 42

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Take advantage of any past connections to help you move forward now. Reuniting with people will open up new avenues. Make the first move to entice others to get involved in your plans. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): You are in the driver's seat, so don't let anyone push you into making a quick decision. Be the one to set the course of things to come. Don't let emotional issues cause you to miscalculate your position. ✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Take the initiative and get things done. Your aggressive behavior will impress onlookers, putting you in a key position to advance. Don't let someone's change of heart slow you down or alter your direction. Stick to your chosen path. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): You may be forced to look at things a little differently, especially concerning the way you are handling money and your relationships. Make a concerted effort to budget. It will prove that you have discipline and stamina and will impress someone important to you. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Don't be too willing to accept what's being offered, especially if emotional factors are involved. You are likely to be deceived by someone who wants to take advantage of your generosity. Time is on your side, so don't move too quickly when you don't have to. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): You may be asked to wear a lot of different hats. Do what you can but, if the task is something you know little about, call on an expert. Your insight and ability to delegate will work to your advantage and will help you expand your allies. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Don't let anyone stop you from following your creative dreams. You have to know that when anyone doesn't want you to advance, he or she is jealous, possessive or wants to beat you at your own game. Don't get angry, get busy and accomplish. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Separate your personal, professional and spiritual life. Emotional matters will escalate, leaving you questioning what to do next. Rely on your basic instincts and you will make the most beneficial choices for your future. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Don't let love lead you astray. Formulate your ideas and put them to the test, even if someone is trying to slow you down. Rework old ideas and you will come up with something entirely new that can work. Being secretive is smart, not sneaky, when you need to make an impact. ✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): There are deals and settlements that can be made. Don't leave anything to chance when it comes to love, partnerships or legal matters. Cover yourself but be sure and make your offer enticing at the same time. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Now is not the time to play games or try to initiate something you know won't be well received. Don't let emotional matters frustrate you. Weed out what isn't working for you and then move forward. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Red tape troubles can be expected, especially if you haven't been honest about what really happened. Emotional difficulties due to past relationships will resurface. Problems with banks, government agencies or authority figures will escalate. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are outspoken, provocative and intent on getting ahead. You are inventive and playful and attract the partners you need to bring on the success you desire.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun,* ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

5								9
		7	1		9	8		
3				6				4
	2		6		5		4	
		1		4		6		
	5		7		2		9	
1				8				7
		5	9		3	2		
7								5

Difficulty Level ★★ 1/27

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

5	8	2	4	6	9	1	3	7
9	6	1	3	8	7	5	4	2
4	3	7	2	5	1	9	6	8
3	7	6	1	4	5	2	8	9
8	9	4	7	2	3	6	1	5
2	1	5	8	9	6	4	7	3
1	5	9	6	7	8	3	2	4
7	2	3	5	1	4	8	9	6
6	4	8	9	3	2	7	5	1

Difficulty Level ★ 1/26

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

UNICEF **Solution: 8 letters**

V	I	L	L	E	N	E	U	V	E	C	A	E	P	A
A	S	S	I	S	T	Y	Q	E	S	A	E	S	I	D
C	E	N	O	I	T	A	C	U	D	E	H	L	N	V
C	H	N	F	I	U	N	R	E	A	C	H	O	S	O
I	G	A	R	I	R	A	S	E	L	L	P	W	E	C
N	U	A	F	U	N	D	R	A	I	S	I	N	G	A
E	H	O	B	G	E	E	T	N	E	T	L	T	A	T
C	O	P	E	V	E	T	G	R	E	U	A	L	Y	E
D	E	R	(E)	O	W	F	J	A	C	Q	U	E	S	A
H	S	L	(V)	I	O	I	A	L	H	C	H	A	N	L
O	O	M	(I)	C	L	G	C	R	Y	N	I	O	C	E
P	L	A	(G)	E	L	A	K	L	R	H	E	L	P	O
E	G	N	A	L	A	V	I	S	I	O	N	P	R	N
S	T	E	V	E	H	U	E	K	R	O	W	K	O	I
P	R	E	V	E	N	T	T	A	K	A	R	A	B	C

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Advocate, Ages, Assist, Barakatt, Chan, Charity, Coin, Copenhagen, Develop, Disease, Education, Equality, Farrow, Fine, Food, Fundraising, Gift, Give, Halloween, Help, Hepburn, Hope, Hughes, Jackie, Jacques, Lange, Lauer, Legal, Lucy Liu, Peace, Prevent, Rangers, Reach, Respond, Sell, Slow, Song, Steve, Tea Leoni, Tent, Turn, Vaccine, Villeneuve, Vision, Voice, Work

Yesterday's Answer: Popinjay

Treasury 4 is available to order by sending check or money order for $10.95 each plus $3.25 postage and handling each ($14.20 total each, U.S. funds only) for the first volume, $1.50 p&h for each additional volume, to Universal Press Syndicate, Attn: Wonderword, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo. 64106 or call toll-free, 1-800-642-6480. Order online at upuzzles.com.

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COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

Opening Date: 01/26/09 Closing Date: 02/06/09

POSITION	DIVISION/SECTION	JVA NO.
Admin. Support Asst.	Water Wastewater Div./ Water Laboratory Section	09-003
Admin Support Asst.	Power Division	09-004
Admin Support Tech.	Power Division	09-005
Meter Technician	Power Division	09-006

LOCATION: *COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION,* ***SAIPAN***

For detailed information on the duties and responsibilities and the minimum qualification, please visit the CUC Human Resource Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building, Room 13.

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• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

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Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Saturday Issue:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

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Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

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Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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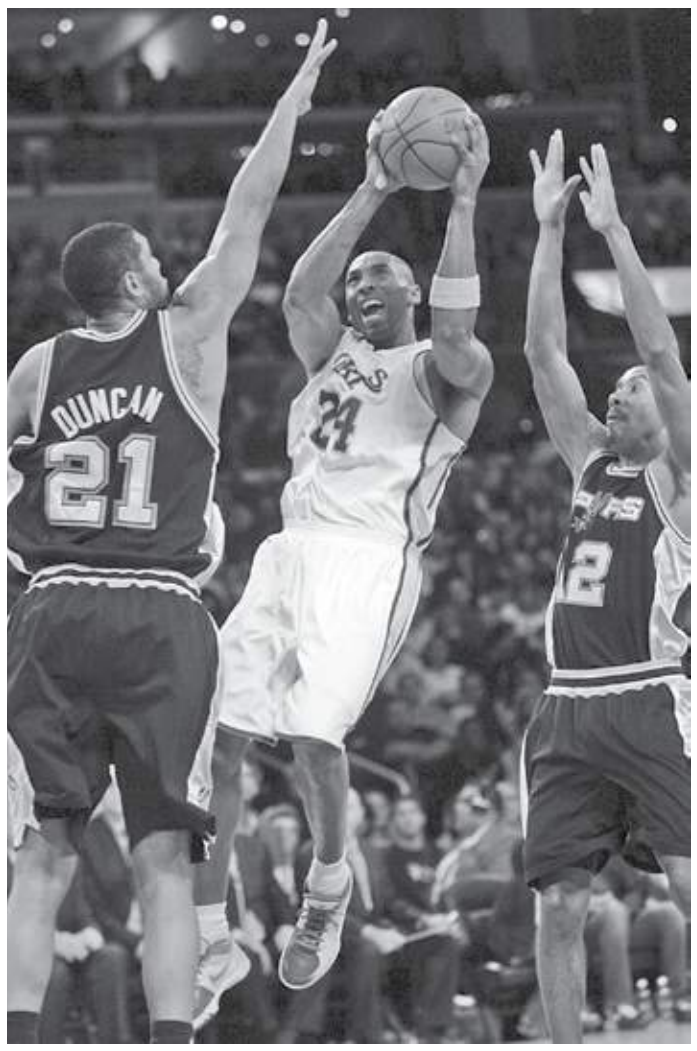
All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

Bryant, Gasol lead Lakers past Spurs

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kobe Bryant scored 22 points before sitting out the fourth quarter, and Pau Gasol added 16 points, five rebounds and four assists as the Los Angeles Lakers routed the San Antonio Spurs 99-85 on Sunday.

The win was the fourth straight and 14th in 17 games for the Lakers (35-8), whose .814 winning percentage is the best in the NBA although the defending champion Boston Celtics (37-9) lead them by a half-game in the overall standings by virtue of their 124-100 victory over Dallas earlier Sunday.

Tony Parker had 19 points and six assists and Tim Duncan added 15 points and eight rebounds for the Spurs (29-14), who lost for just the fourth time in their past 18 games.



AP

Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant, center, drives between San Antonio Spurs' Tim Duncan (21) and Bruce Bowen in the first half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009, in Los Angeles.

Celtics 124, Mavericks 100

At Boston, Ray Allen scored 20 of his 23 points in the first half when the Celtics opened a 27-point lead, and Eddie House added seven 3-pointers to help Boston beat Dallas and give the defending NBA champion its eighth straight victory.

House scored 23—making 7-of-11 from 3-point range—Kevin Garnett scored 23, and Rajon Rondo had 13 points and 14 assists for Boston. After a 2-7 slump that was the worst of the new Big Three era, the Celtics have won eight in a row by an average of 16 points, and six straight in double digits.

Jason Terry scored 27 for the Mavericks, who have won just three of their last nine games.

Suns 104, Hawks 99

At Atlanta, Amare Stoudemire scored 23 points, and Shaquille O'Neal had 19 points and 11 rebounds to help Phoenix down Atlanta and snap a three-game losing streak.

Steve Nash, who finished with 14 points and 13 assists, used a give-and-go with Stoudemire to make it 102-99 with 26.2 seconds remaining.

The Hawks had won three straight, but made just one field goal, a short jumper by Solomon Jones, after Jones gave Atlanta its last lead, 95-94, at the 6:06 mark.

O'Neal hit two free throws to put Phoenix ahead 96-95 for the game's 19th and final lead change.

Reserve guard Leandro Barbosa had 20 points for the Suns, who had lost five of six and were coming off a season-worst 22-point loss at Charlotte.

Raptors 113, Kings 97

At Toronto, Chris Bosh scored 31 points and Andrea Bargnani added 24 as Toronto handed Sacramento its their fifth straight loss.

Jose Calderon had 16 points and eight assists as Toronto won its second straight following a season-high seven-game losing streak. Jermaine O'Neal added 11 points and 10 rebounds and Anthony Parker scored 11 points for the Raptors.

John Salmons scored 21 points for the Kings, who are 0-18 against Eastern Conference opponents this season and have not beaten an East team since a 106-100 home win over Toronto on March 16, 2008.

Rockets 108, Pistons 105

At Auburn Hills, Michigan, Ron Artest scored three of his 24 points at the line in the final 14 seconds to help Houston hold off Detroit.

Artest and Tracy McGrady returned to the lineup for the Rockets, who were without Yao Ming because of a knee injury.

Luis Scolahad 21 points while starting for Yao, and McGrady scored 15. Shane Battier and Rafer Alston both added 14, and Von Wafer scored 10 points.

Detroit's Richard Hamilton scored 27 and Rasheed Wallace had 22 points. Allen Iverson scored 17 and Rodney Stuckey had 14 points.

Timberwolves 109, Bulls 108, OT

At Minneapolis, Al Jefferson scored a season-high 39 points to lead Minnesota to an overtime victory over Chicago, the Timberwolves' ninth win in 11 games.

With the win, Minnesota sent Chicago to its fifth straight loss and improved to 9-2 in January, surpassing San Antonio for the league's best record in 2009.

Ben Gordon led six Chicago players in double figures with 23 points.

Rookie Kevin Love added 19 points and a career-high 15 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who completed their biggest comeback of the season after falling behind by 16 points in the first quarter.

Pacers 98, Bobcats 93

At Indianapolis, Danny Granger had 27 points to lead Indiana past Charlotte for its season-high fifth straight win at home.

Raja Bell and Boris Diaw had 18 points apiece, and Emeka Okafor finished with 14 points and eight rebounds for Charlotte, which had won five of six.

Charlotte, which trailed by 14 in the third quarter, cut the deficit to 96-93 on Bell's jumper with 1:25 left, and Jeff Foster's free throw gave Indiana a four-point lead. Following two missed free throws by Diaw and Gerald Wallace's missed 3-pointer, T.J. Ford's foul shot sealed the victory.

Warriors 107, Clippers 92

At Oakland, California, Corey Maggette scored 20 points against his former team as the Golden State Warriors downed the Los Angeles Clippers to end a two-game slide.

Anthony Morrow added 17 points and Kelenna Azubuike had 16 points for the Warriors, who beat the Clippers for the fifth straight time. Andris Biedrins had 12 points and 14 rebounds.

Eric Gordon scored 21 points for the Clippers, which lost their seventh straight on the road and 15th in 17 games overall. Rookie center DeAndre Jordan grabbed a season-best 18 rebounds to go with eight points.

The Warriors led 55-44 at the half and took a 20-point lead—84-64—into the final quarter.

NY Knicks player's ex-girlfriend killed in Chicago

CHICAGO (AP)—A woman found shot to death in a Chicago apartment was a former girlfriend of New York Knicks player Eddy Curry and the mother of his 3-year-old son, Curry's attorney said Sunday.

A relative found the bodies of Nova Henry, 24, and her 9-month-old daughter, Ava, in their apartment near the South Side on Saturday evening, Chicago police spokeswoman Monique Bond said. Both died from multiple gunshot wounds, the Cook County medical examiner's office said Sunday.

Curry's 3-year-old son was found unharmed at the scene. Curry is a former player for the Chicago Bulls.

Chicago police offered few details of the investigation at a news conference Sunday.

Deputy Superintendent Steve Peterson said police want to talk to someone who was "the object of an order of protection" but that person has not been located yet.

He declined to give further information.

Rob Bryant, who said he was Nova Henry's uncle, told the Chicago Sun-Times that Henry had a restraining order against her boyfriend. "She was trying to avoid all this," Bryant said.

Curry's attorney, Kelly Saindon, said the basketball player's family was devastated.

The Knicks issued a statement Sunday on Curry's behalf asking the media to respect the privacy of the two families.

"The Curry family is deeply saddened by this tragic loss and will keep the Henry family in their prayers," the statement said.

The city recently has seen several high-profile deaths blamed on domestic violence. A brother-in-law of Oscar-winning actress Jennifer Hudson pleaded not guilty Tuesday to charges he fatally shot Hudson's mother, brother and nephew. Prosecutors allege William Balfour killed them in October because he was upset the actress's sister had been dating another man.

Browns hire George Kokinis as GM

CLEVELAND (AP)—Baltimore pro personnel director George Kokinis has been hired as Cleveland's general manager, reuniting him with new Browns coach and close friend Eric Mangini.

Kokinis, who began his NFL career as an intern in the Browns' operations department in 1991, was hand-picked by Mangini, who recommended him during his first interview with Browns owner Randy Lerner on Dec. 30. Mangini took over as Cleveland's coach on Jan. 7, just one week after he was fired following three seasons with the New York Jets.

Determined to match a coach and GM who can work well together after the Romeo Crennel-Phil Savage relationship failed, Lerner is teaming up a pair of friends who shared an apartment when they first broke into the league and have remained tight.

"The Browns are excited to bring George back to Cleveland where he began his NFL career," Lerner said in a team release. "He is a tireless worker that has spent his entire career evaluating talent and knows the type of player it takes to be successful in this league and in our division."

Terms of Kokinis' deal were not immediately known.

The Browns have scheduled a news conference on Monday to introduce the 41-year-old Kokinis, who spent 13 years with the Ravens, the past six as the club's director of pro personnel.

"I would like to thank Randy Lerner for the extraordinary opportunity," Kokinis said in a statement. "Cleveland is a football town and I look forward to working alongside Eric Mangini and the rest of the organization."

Cleveland's GM position has been open since Lerner fired Savage after the Browns concluded a 4-12 season. The Savage-Crennel team produced a 24-40 record and no playoff appearances in four years. Lerner still owes the pair millions after signing them to contract extensions last winter.

Kokinis' hiring has been expected for more than a week. He spent two days in meetings earlier this week at the team's headquarters. Along with Mangini and members of his new coaching staff, the pair evaluated Cleveland's current roster and began early preparations for free agency, the draft, minicamp and summer training camp.

With Baltimore, Kokinis was one of Ravens GM Ozzie Newsome's top aides. He was responsible for analyzing rosters, evaluating the free-agent market and assisting in the negotiations of draft picks.

In Cleveland, Kokinis, who wasn't on Lerner's radar screen when his GM search began, inherits a team with less talent and many more problems than in Baltimore.

The Browns had high hopes following a 10-6 season in 2007, but instead they crumbled in '08 under the pressure of those expectations. They went 1-7 at home and were reduced to playing their fourth-string quarterback down the stretch because of injuries. There was also a lack of needed discipline as players did what they pleased.

Mangini was hired by Lerner, in part, to bring more discipline to the team.

It's unclear how Kokinis and Mangini will divide their duties or who will have final say over the Browns' 53-man roster.

The Browns should benefit by Kokinis' intimate knowledge of the AFC North. He worked as an advance scout with the Ravens and played a key role in their week-to-week assessment of their upcoming opponent.

One of the first decisions facing the Mangini-Kokinis team will be what do with quarterback Derek Anderson, who was benched midway through the season for Brady Quinn. Anderson is owed a $5 million roster bonus in March. If he is deemed expendable, the Browns could trade him for draft picks. Savage dealt several 2009 picks, leaving the Browns with only four selections in this April's draft.

Lerner interviewed five people for the GM vacancy. In addition to Kokinis, Lerner spoke with former New England vice president of personnel Scott Pioli, who recently took over as GM in Kansas City, Browns director of player personnel T.J. McCreight, Giants director of player personnel David Gettleman and former Jacksonville vice president of player personnel James "Shack" Harris.

McCreight spent most of last week in Moblie, Ala., scouting the Senior Bowl. He was reportedly fired on Friday, but the Browns have not confirmed his ouster.

Perez shoots 69 to win Hope Classic

LAQUINTA, Calif. (AP)—Remaining calm despite the swirling wind and a tense duel for the lead, Pat Perez finally got his first PGA Tour victory—with a lot of help from Steve Stricker.

Perez won the Bob Hope Classic on Sunday, taking advantage of Stricker's collapse and holding off John Merrick by three strokes. The winner shot a 3-under 69 for a 33-under 327 total in the five-day event.

"I just tried to stay pretty even-keeled," Perez said. "I figured if I could just play solid and hit some good shots and kind of stay calm and think about what I'm doing out there, I was going to be fine."

In the past, "calm" wasn't necessarily a word used about Perez and his play. He seemed quick to anger and grow frustrated when he wasn't playing well.

"I just got tired of getting upset all the time," the 32-year-old Perez said. "It's a lot of energy. I learned how the best guys do it."

Mentioning Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, Vijay Singh and Ernie Els, among others, Perez said, "All these guys are pretty even-keeled. They don't let things bother them. They put stuff behind them. Before, if I made a double on five, the tournament was over. I look at that as a speed bump now."

After hitting into the water and dropping to 29 under on the fifth hole, Perez steadied and still made the turn at 35.

Merrick, who began the day eight shots behind Stricker but moved in front briefly on the back nine, shot a 67.

Stricker, 33 under at the start of play after rounds of 61 and 62, had a 77 to tie for third with Mike Weir (67) at 28 under. Stricker had a triple bogey on No. 7 and a quadruple bogey on No. 10, hitting into the water on both holes.

Perez, playing in the final group, locked up the victory by knocking his approach shot over the water from 200 yards on No. 18 to 3 feet to set up an eagle. Merrick, winless on the tour, already had finished his round with a par on 18.

Perez didn't consider playing it safe on the final hole.

"I don't lay up," Perez said. "I hit a 6-iron. I mean, how hard is it? I'm not going to lay up with a wedge over here and hit a wedge over there. It's a 6-iron. I was going to hit it."

AP

Pat Perez holds his trophy after winning the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic PGA golf tournament Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009 in La Quinta, Calif. Perez shot 33-under-par for the win.

He beamed and doffed his cap after the ball rolled onto the green and the fans in the grandstands erupted in cheers. He stopped grinning only briefly, while he was bending over his final putt.

Merrick's second-place finish was the highest for the 26-year-old former UCLA star, who is beginning his third full season on the tour. His round included an extraordinarily lucky bounce on No. 16, when his shot from the fairway seemed headed for a small canal next to the green. The ball hit the concrete lining the waterway, bounced across the water and rolled within 10 feet of the hole. He two-putted for par.

"That's probably one of the luckiest breaks I've ever seen," Merrick said.

Perez, who led the first three days of the 90-hole event before falling three shots off Stricker's pace, had said the ideal conditions made the early rounds "like playing in a dome."

Not so for closing over the Palmer Course at PGA West.

Club selection, figuring distance and direction, all became a challenge. The wind would quiet one moment, then gust and swirl the next. Flagsticks on the greens rocked back and forth with the flags flapping, go still, then just as suddenly begin shuddering again.

Perez considered that a positive for him.

"If the weather was perfect, someone could have shot 61 or 61," Perez said. "So I actually didn't mind the wind blowing all the way around. But it was definitely tough."

The gusts took their toll on Stricker.

"We would feel it in our face on one hole, and the same hole it would feel downwind. So it was all over the place and difficult to pick a correct club," Stricker said. "It was hard for me to feel comfortable with anything, and it showed for me a couple of times today."

After hitting into the water and taking a triple bogey to lose the lead on the seventh hole, he found water again on No. 10, but only after hitting out of bounds. His quadruple bogey there dropped him back into the pack.

Stricker, who had the PGA Tour-record stretch of 61-62 the previous two days, had birdied No. 6 to go to 34 under and open a three-stroke lead over Perez.

Joe Durant's tour record for 90 holes, 36-under 324 in the 2001 Hope, seemed in peril as records fell in the early rounds. Then the wind, often a factor in the Hope over the years, finally kicked up on the final day.

Perez earned $918,000, while Stricker took home $295,800.

Stricker was 33 under after four rounds, bettering the tour's 72-hole record of 31 under set by Ernie Els in his victory at the 2003 Mercedes Championships. Stricker's 61-62 was a low for consecutive rounds; Mark Calcavecchia set the record by shooting 60-64 in the 2001 Phoenix Open, and Perez tied it with his 61-63 start in the Hope.

Reports: Torre takes swings at Yankees in new book

NEW YORK (AP)—Joe Torre takes some harsh swings at Alex Rodriguez, Brian Cashman and the New York Yankees in a book due out early next month, according to New York newspaper reports.

"The Yankee Years" reveals that Rodriguez was called "A-Fraud" by his teammates and the star slugger developed an obsession with shortstop Derek Jeter, the New York Post and the Daily News reported Sunday.

Torre, who managed the Yankees from 1996-2007 before taking over the Los Angeles Dodgers last season, also says he was betrayed by Cashman, New York's longtime general manager, the Daily News reported on its Web site.

Torre had a hot-and-cold relationship with Yankees ownership, including George Steinbrenner, but Cashman was thought to be a consistent ally.

At the annual New York baseball writers' dinner Sunday night, Cashman told reporters that Torre called him earlier in the day.

"I woke up today and saw the newspapers and I was surprised. My first reaction is to wait to hear or see what's in the book," Cashman was quoted as saying on Newsday's Web site, adding that he was "comfortable" with his relationship with Torre. "I'm glad Joe gave me a call from Hawaii. It certainly made me feel better about what I was reading today."

The book, co-authored by Sports Illustrated's Tom Verducci, is due out Feb. 3 and is being published by Doubleday. It is not a first-person account but instead a third-person narrative by Verducci based on dozens of interviews with Yankees players and employees, ESPN.com reported, citing an unidentified source.

In the book, Torre also says Steinbrenner learned the manager had prostate cancer (during spring training 1999) before Torre even had a chance to inform him.

Torre guided the Yankees to the postseason in all 12 years as manager and won four World Series titles from 1996-2000. But he was offered a one-year contract with a pay cut after the 2007 season, following New York's third straight first-round playoff exit.

Torre turned down the proposal, saying he felt insulted by the offer of bonuses based on postseason performance. He soon agreed to a three-year contract with the Dodgers and led them to the NL championship series last year before they were eliminated by the Philadelphia Phillies, who went on to win the World Series.

Serena Williams advances to quarterfinals

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Serena Williams reached the Australian Open quarterfinals when a tearful and dizzy Victoria Azarenka had to retire in the second set on Monday due to sickness.

The 19-year-old from Belarus was one of three players who had to withdraw from fourth-round matches on a sunny but mild day in Melbourne, with temperatures hovering around 75 degrees.

The second-seeded Williams was up a service break at 4-2 in the second set after No. 13 Azarenka had won the first set 6-3.

Azarenka, serving at 30-30, wobbled back into the shade at the rear of the court, holding her face and choking back tears as she tried to regather herself.

She had needed a medical timeout earlier in the set and left the playing arena. She returned for 1 1/2 games but was unable to continue and was helped from the court soon after by two trainers.

"I just want to go inside and make sure she's OK. I feel so bad. She was playing so well," Williams said in an on-court interview. "There are so many more great Australian Opens out there for her."

Officials said Azarenka was suffering from dizziness and an "undisclosed illness."

Williams, seeking a 10th Grand Slam singles title, next plays 2004 U.S. Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova, who advanced when Zheng Zie of China retired at 4-1 in the first set.

No. 22 Zheng injured her left wrist when she tumbled after the third game. She had treatment immediately but retired two games later.

The all-French men's match between No. 6 Gilles Simon and his longtime friend Gael Monfils lasted only three sets.

No. 6 Simon, who was leading 6-4, 2-6, 6-1 when No. 12 Monfils withdrew with a right wrist problem, reached the quarterfinals at a major for the first time.

The winners of the two completed women's matches meet in the quarterfinals.

Carla Suarez Navarro, the 20-year-old Spaniard who had an upset win over seven-time Grand Slam winner Venus Williams in the second round, beat No. 21 Anabel Medina Garrigues 6-3, 6-2.

She next plays Olympic gold medalist Elena Dementieva, the No. 4 seed from Russia who made the quarterfinals for the first time in 11 years at Melbourne Park with a 6-2, 6-2 win over Slovakia's Dominika Cibulkova.

Azarenka was taking the match to Williams, with both women going for winners constantly.

Williams was looking quicker on her feet than in her last two matches, but her first serve was another matter.

Clearly trying to concentrate, she regularly was bouncing the ball 20 times—she once hit 37—before making her toss.

At 3-5 in the first set, Williams double-faulted for the second time to give Azarenka a set point, then loudly cursed her first serve, earning a warning from the umpire for an audible obscenity and sending a backhand long on the next point.

Things got better for Williams as she saved three break points in her opening serve of the second set in a game that went to deuce five times, then broke Azarenka to pull ahead at 2-1, shouting "Come on!"

Azarenka appeared to become ill after pulling within 3-2 and went off court. Williams took advantage of the time to get her ankles retaped.

Serena Williams, who has won the Australian title in 2003, 2005 and 2007, and Kuznetsova are the only major winners still in the women's draw.

Suarez Navarro is into the quarterfinals in her first trip to the Australian Open and second time overall, after reaching that round as a qualifier in the French Open.

The fourth-seeded Dementieva, who reached the finals at the French and U.S. Opens in 2004 but has not been to a Grand Slam championship match since, extended her winning streak to 14 matches. She won two titles in tuneup events.

Dementieva was ousted in the quarterfinals at the French last year and reached the semifinals at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open.

The top eight seeds in the men's draw made it to the fourth round here for the first time since 1970.

No. 1 Rafael Nadal, No. 4 Andy Murray and No. 5 Jo-Wilfried Tsonga were in action later Monday. If the top eight reach the quarters, it will be a first in a Grand Slam in the Open era.

Simon secured his place quickly Monday. No. 2 Roger Federer, No. 3 Novak Djokovic, No. 7 Andy Roddick and No. 8 Juan Martin del Potro all made it through on Sunday.

It was a tough win for Simon.

Monfils, a semifinalist at the French Open last year, had treatment during the third set, after going to the baseline to start the fourth, walked to the net and told Simon he could not continue.

The pair hugged at the net and kissed each other's cheek. Despite being close in age— Simon is 24, Monfils is 22 - it was their first match at tour level.

"It's very hard, because we're very close," Simon said in an on-court interview. "I didn't want to win like this. Sorry everybody, that's not the way you want to win."

Hamoy wins in Ken Phillips' birthday bash

Chester Hamoy showed he wasn't just a 9-ball specialist by going undefeated in USS Peleliu Club owner Ken Phillips' birthday 8-ball tournament held last Wednesday at the Garapan sports bar and watering hole.

Hamoy marched past Annie Tesiro, Ron Chisato, and Juancho Mendoza to head the winners' bracket, then defeated Mendoza again for the championship.

Tesiro surprised veteran Rolly Villanueva in the first round, making two hard bank shots and a difficult long cut on the 8-ball. Chisato got by Taylor Watanabe before falling to Hamoy.

Jerry Soriano ran the table on Ken Phillips and Marvin Cabo bested John Mongami, before Mendoza sent them to the losers' bracket. Villanueva came back by defeating Mongami, then fell to Soriano.

Phillips eliminated Tesiro and Cabo. Chisato reached the losers' bracket final by topping Soriano and Phillips, but had to settle for third place after losing to Mendoza.

Hamoy also ran away with the Tuesday 9-ball title, with Chisato taking second place.

USSP is holding weekly 8-ball tournaments on Mondays, with 9-ball competition on Tuesdays. The entry fee is $5 for both tournaments.

For more information, contact Rose or Ken Phillips at 233-1984. ***(USSP)***

ZAPANTA

From Page 28

mance in Game (166) and saved the best for last recording 244 pinfalls in Game 4 for an average of 175 pinfalls.

Yarobwemal had the best start in the field with 166 pinfalls in Game 1, but he faltered in her bid for the January title after slowing down in the last three games (143, 135, and 159).

Marion McKenzie finished third after tallying 596 pinfalls, followed by 2008 Prince of the Lanes Zack Cruz (540), Nikko Guerrero (471), Troy Verdaguer (463), Marcel McKenzie (344), and Toby Verdaguer (234).

In the Budweiser King and Queen of the Lanes first monthly tournament, Raymond Zapanta and Linda Yarobwemal were leading the field after Sunday's roll-offs.

Raymond, who tallied a total of 793 pinfalls in four games, was holding to a 49-pinfall lead over Simon Manacop (744), while Yarobwemal was having a slim 11-pinfall lead against Ron Cal, 716-705.

If Raymond and Yarobwemal's scores were unbeaten last night, they get to keep the King and Queen titles for January.

Participants in the King and Queen races can bowl twice (Sunday and Monday), but only the highest score will be counted.

Twelve other female keglers joined the first roll-off of the month with Diane Chong (675) in third place, followed by Carol McKenzie (646), Emi Williams (645), Lala Taitano (626), Yho Villavicencio (624), Elena Soll (617), Lynn Santos (604), Mhel Regis (586), Marie Manansala (585), Gloria Omechelang (558), and Eileen Schardt (532).

In the King of the Lanes roll-off, Percy Omechelang (725) was in third place after Sunday's tournament, followed by former youth bowler Jeremy Williams (672), Lito Teodoro (652), Kitz Barja (646), and Tony Yarobwemal (473).

ROLLERS

From Page 28

RBC Rollers are ahead by one win against second placer Docomo.

Docomo 75, IT&E 70

Docomo improved to a 3-0 slate and kept pace with RBC Rollers after outclassing IT&E, 75-70, in the second game Sunday night.

Ryan Sanciango drilled 18 of his game-high 25 points in the fourth period to thwart IT&E's repeated comeback bids.

Docomo controlled the battle of the two telecommunication giants with Gil Miranda firing 18 first half points and giving his team a 37-34 halftime lead.

Miranda went cold in the second half, but Sanciango, who was held to two points in the first half, was there to save the day for Docomo.

Sanciangco and Ponce Rasa combined for 11 of Docomo's 18 points in the third period to give their team more breathing space going into the payoff canto, 55-48.

In the fourth period, the backcourt duo of Brendo Talania and Mike Olaitiman tried to bring IT&E back on line, but fell short, as they failed to contain Sanciangco in the last quarter.

IT&E dropped to a 1-3 slate.

MBI 109, Mobil 102

In Saturday's game, MBI downed Mobil, 109-102.

MBI gained its second victory in four games, while Mobil remained winless in four matches.

J.R. Barrios and Bing Marasigan combined for 50 points for MBI, which survived Andres "Jhun" Estolas Jr.' 47-point explosion.

Barrios and Marasigan nailed seven points apiece in the fourth quarter, while White Capalad had eight, as MBI outgunned Mobil in the final canto, 30-25, to preserve the win.

The second game Saturday night between Dollar Days (3-0) and Athlete's Foot (2-1) was suspended due to rain.

The match was halted at the 4:13 mark of the third period with Dollar Days having the possession and the lead, 59-49.

Saturday's Game

MBI 109 – Barrios 26, Marasigan 24, Capalad 18, Moises 14, Mateo 13, Baculud 5, Cordero 5, Opone 2, Tagle 2.

Mobil 102 – Estolas 47, Lauron 26, Dayrit 11, Abuan 10, Culala 4, Gomes 4.

Scoring by quarters: 24-26, 48-47, 79-73, 109-102.

Sunday's Games

First Game

RBC Rollers 81 – J. Camacho 22, Ulloa 14, V. Teregeyo 13, Namelo 10, D. Teregeyo 9, Omar 7, Iguel 6.

Shooters 66 – De Guzman 17, J. Tabora 16, Mangali 11, Samparada 4, Caranto 2, Layugan 2, Barroso 2, Isip 2, Guellas 2, Morales 2, Feliciano 2.

Scoring by quarters: 23-12, 35-21, 58-44, 81-66.

Second Game

Docomo 75 – Ry. Sanciangco 25, Miranda 20, Rasa 16, Diaz 6, Hamoy 4, Samson 4.

IT&E 70 – Olaitiman 18, Factor 14, Talania 13, Acosta 10, Gapor 4, Montano 3.

Scoring by quarters: 20-14, 37-34, 55-48, 75-70.

P&S

From Page 28

the team's fifth in nine outings putting them in a tie for ninth place with Pacific Oriental, Inc.

PSS absorbed its eighth loss in 11 matches and dropped to 14th spot in the 20-team field.

PSS was still in the game behind by only one run after five complete innings, 6-7, as it shut out P&S in the fourth and fifth inning.

But P&S recovered with a five-run top of the sixth on a Jess Mesa two-run double and one run apiece from Mike Sablan, Jack Diaz, and Stanley Laniyo to widen the gap, 12-6.

P&S added two more runs at the top of the last inning, and its defense allowed PSS to score only once in the last two innings on a Pete Mendiola single preserving the victory for the former.

Pitcher Mark Toves went 4-for-4 for at-bat for P&S, scored a triple and three RBIs, and had two strikeouts.

First baseman Joe Quitugua also had three RBIs and was 2-for-3 at the plate.

P&S was 19-for-40 at bat for an average of .475, while PSS struggled with a batting average of .333 after going only 11-for-33.

WOMEN'S

DCCA 6, CHC 5

Defending women's champion Department of Community and Cultural Affairs eked out a 6-5 win over Commonwealth Health Center in the lone women's game of the night.

The victory snapped DCCA's two-game losing skid and improved the defending champion's record to 4-3 helping the team remain in second place behind the league-leading Northern Marianas College (7-1).

DCCA scored two runs each from the second to the fifth inning, before CHC shut the defending champion out in the last two innings.

But CHC failed to steal the win when it made only one run apiece in the first and second and three in the fifth inning.

At the bottom of the sixth, DCCA pitcher Eula Matsumoto struck out Meng Yamada for the first out, while second batter Ester Leerulu advanced on a Bert Camacho error. CHC was called for the second out when Sheena Sablan flied out.

Fourth batter Natalie Reyes was preparing at the plate when it rained. Organizers later suspended the game and awarded the win to DCCA, which handed CHC its sixth loss in eight matches.

The third game of the night featuring Docomo and the Department of Land and Natural Resources was also cancelled.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	37	9	.804	_
Philadelphia	21	21	.500	14
New Jersey	20	24	.455	16
New York	18	25	.419	17 1 / 2
Toronto	18	28	.391	19

Southeast Division

Orlando	33	10	.767	_
Atlanta	26	17	.605	7
Miami	23	19	.548	9 1 / 2
Charlotte	18	26	.409	15 1 / 2
Washington	9	34	.209	24

Central Division

Cleveland	34	8	.810	_
Detroit	24	19	.558	10 1 / 2
Milwaukee	22	25	.468	14 1 / 2
Chicago	18	27	.400	17 1 / 2
Indiana	17	27	.386	18

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	29	14	.674	_
New Orleans	26	14	.650	1 1 / 2
Houston	28	17	.622	2
Dallas	25	19	.568	4 1 / 2
Memphis	11	32	.256	18

Northwest Division

Denver	29	15	.659	_
Portland	26	17	.605	2 1 / 2
Utah	25	20	.556	4 1 / 2
Minnesota	15	27	.357	13
Oklahoma City	9	35	.205	20

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	35	8	.814	_
Phoenix	24	18	.571	10 1 / 2
Golden State	14	31	.311	22
L.A. Clippers	10	33	.233	25
Sacramento	10	35	.222	26

Yesterday's Games

Boston 124, Dallas 100
L.A. Lakers 99, San Antonio 85
Phoenix 104, Atlanta 99
Toronto 113, Sacramento 97
Houston 108, Detroit 105
Minnesota 109, Chicago 108, OT
Indiana 98, Charlotte 93
Denver 117, Utah 97
Golden State 107, L.A. Clippers 92

BOB HOPE CHRYSLER CLASSIC SCORES

LA QUINTA, California (AP)—Scores Sunday from the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic, a $5.1 million U.S. PGA Tour event at four par-72 courses; 6,930-yard PGA West (Palmer course), 6,924-yard PGA West (Nicklaus course), 7,017-yard Bermuda Dunes CC, 7,403-yard Silver Rock:

FINAL ROUND

Pat Perez	61-63-67-67-69	327
John Merrick	68-65-67-63-67	330
Mike Weir	62-70-67-66-67	332
Steve Stricker	65-67-61-62-77	332
Stephen Ames	71-63-70-66-63	333
Bo Van Pelt	66-65-68-67-67	333
Tim Clark	66-69-63-66-69	333
Webb Simpson	68-66-64-66-69	333
Brad Adamonis	67-62-71-69-65	334
Chad Campbell	66-71-68-65-64	334
John Senden	67-70-65-64-68	334
Tom Pernice, Jr.	65-63-68-69-69	334
Richard S. Johnson	63-65-67-69-70	334
Bill Lunde	67-68-62-69-69	335
Rich Beem	66-65-65-68-71	335
D.J. Trahan	65-67-65-68-70	335
Chris Stroud	65-63-67-69-71	335
Robert Garrigus	67-65-64-66-73	335
Lucas Glover	65-68-68-67-68	336
Brian Gay	65-70-72-63-66	336
John Huston	69-70-64-64-69	336
Scott Piercy	66-66-70-65-69	336
Charley Hoffman	72-66-64-65-69	336
Mathew Goggin	66-70-62-67-71	336
David Toms	68-65-68-67-69	337
Steve Marino	65-69-64-70-69	337
Chris DiMarco	64-68-69-66-70	337
Bill Haas	68-68-67-67-67	337
Colt Knost	69-68-70-63-67	337
John Mallinger	66-67-65-68-71	337
Nick Watney	66-71-72-63-65	337
Bubba Watson	62-69-68-63-75	337
Matt Kuchar	66-67-71-69-64	337
Ryuji Imada	67-65-69-67-70	338
Charlie Wi	68-67-61-71-71	338
Casey Wittenberg	69-66-64-68-71	338
Scott McCarron	66-68-63-69-72	338
Jason Dufner	63-65-67-71-72	338
David Mathis	66-66-69-65-72	338
David Berganio, Jr.	63-64-68-70-73	338
Vaughn Taylor	63-67-64-68-76	338
Briny Baird	63-63-70-72-71	339
Woody Austin	66-68-68-67-70	339
Justin Leonard	72-67-63-68-69	339
Jerry Kelly	66-71-65-68-69	339
Ken Duke	68-68-64-71-68	339
Cameron Beckman	68-67-70-68-66	339
Dean Wilson	67-71-66-65-71	340
Kevin Sutherland	64-67-67-69-73	340
Ryan Palmer	70-65-66-66-73	340
Cliff Kresge	68-63-67-73-69	340
Joe Ogilvie	70-73-67-62-68	340
Joe Durant	73-66-65-69-67	340
Rick Price	64-70-66-69-72	341
Heath Slocum	65-67-73-65-71	341
Martin Laird	67-68-68-68-70	341
Ben Crane	63-70-70-69-69	341
Nicholas Thompson	66-70-68-68-70	342
Alex Cejka	68-67-68-70-69	342
Peter Lonard	65-67-68-69-74	343
Jason Bohn	66-70-65-67-75	343
Jeff Klauk	67-67-67-69-73	343
Fred Couples	68-72-64-68-71	343
Chris Couch	67-63-69-66-78	343
Michael Allen	68-71-66-68-70	343
Chez Reavie	66-66-68-69-75	344
Dustin Johnson	68-71-67-66-72	344
Bob Estes	66-69-66-71-72	344
Tim Petrovic	68-69-65-71-71	344
Kirk Triplett	67-69-69-65-75	345
Steve Lowery	67-65-71-68-74	345
Michael Letzig	66-68-68-71-72	345
Glen Day	65-68-71-67-77	348
Brendon de Jonge	67-70-65-70-78	350

By The Associated Press

LOCAL SCORES

BUDWEISER SOFTBALL STANDINGS

Men's Division

DCCA	11	0
CPA	10	1
Freedom Air	8	1
No Zone	8	2
Legislature	8	4
Joeten Motors	7	3
Beach Boys	6	3
Docomo	6	4
POI	5	4
P & S	5	4
DLNR	5	5
DEQ/CRM	5	5
Law & Order	3	7
PSS	3	8
CUC	3	7
CHC	3	7
PIC	2	7
Customs	2	9
Mayors	1	11
Hopwood	0	10

Women's Division

NMC	7	1
DCCA	4	3
Finance	3	4
CUC	3	4
CHC	1	6

NAVY HILL BASKETBALL LEAGUE

RBC Rollers	4	0
Dollar Days	3	0
Docomo	3	0
Athlete's Foot	2	1
MBI	2	2
MIGS	1	1
Uncle Ben	1	1
Inscape	1	2
IT& E	1	3
San Antonio Shooters	0	2
670 Rollers	0	2
Mobil	0	4

EVENFLOW

From Page 28

four sets, Rocball rules state only one set overtime will decide the match. Had the game not ended in a tie, the trailing team must win two sets overtime, while the leading squad needs only one set.

The first team to score 10 points or a goal wins a set in overtime.

In Evenflow's case, Lisua did both, as his team was ahead, 7-2, when he knocked down the winning goal.

Evenflow was off to a hot start taking a 26-16 win in the opening set.

Ghasias Brothers regrouped in the second set and found their rhythm en route to a close 26-25 triumph to cut Evenflow's lead to single digit, 42-51.

The defending Rocball league champions moved within five, 71-76, going into the fourth set after a come-from-behind 29-25 triumph in the third set.

Ghasias Brothers cruised to their third straight set victory after a 28-23 win in the fourth set. But their five-point winning margin was not enough to allow them to juice out Evenflow and retain the "Gorilla."

In Rocball, a juiced-out win is only handed to a team, which wins the fourth set and at the same time holds the lead after the regulation.

Ghasias Brothers' five-point win over Evenflow in the fourth set only tied the game at 99-all, and the former failed to pick up where it left off losing in the first set o-kon.

The third game in the "Gorilla" will be played next Saturday with Evenflow as host.

Ghasias Brothers will join Okies for a month-long vacation before they are allowed to become challengers in the "Gorilla Games."

Rites of Passage VI: Conviction

Members of Team Guam pose after a victorious night as all six fighters prevailed over their rivals from Saipan.

PHOTOS By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

Martin Ayuyu hits the deck before he eventually won against Francisco Palacios via first round tap out.

Tony Reyes is down on the floor in the early going before he defeated Derrick "Pinchi" Rangamar.

Referee Baby Joe Taimanglo orders Tom Kim to back off from E.J. Palacios. Kim won via rear-naked choke in 1:41 of the first round.

Kyle Peterson is on top of George Cruz Jr. in the first round before the former won via tap out in 1:48 of the second round.

Main event winner Ryan "The Dentist' Urquizu looks on a half-conscious Maitai "The Charger" Charley, as referee Jason Tarkong stops the fight. Urquizu connected on a powerful right hook to Charley's chin to score the TKO in just 11 seconds of the first round.

Guam's Ryan Urquizu speaks to the crowd moments after his first round TKO vs. Maitai Charley in the main event.

Referee Jason Tarkong raises the hand of Hosea Ware, who won against Syl "The Deal" Teregeyo in 1:24 of the first round.

Hen "The Ledgen" Taga is up in the air vs. Seung Min Lee in the first round. Lee won via unanimous decision.

George Cruz Jr. grimaces in pain as Kyle Peterson is on top of him, while referee Baby Joe Taimanglo looks on.

Stacey Rangamar (facing camera) hits Mocklin Enisar with a straight to the face in the first round. Enisar quit in the early part of the second round of the lone ladies MMA bout.

Perez shoots 69 to win Hope Classic

Remaining calm despite the swirling wind and a tense duel for the lead, Pat Perez finally got his first PGA Tour victory—with a lot of help from Steve Stricker.

25

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Bryant, Gasol lead Lakers past Spurs

Kobe Bryant scored 22 points before sitting out the fourth quarter, and Pau Gasol added 16 points, five rebounds and four assists as the Los Angeles Lakers routed the San Antonio Spurs 99-85 on Sunday.

24

Evenflow boots out Brothers in 'Gorilla'

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

An Evenflow player serves during a game in the Rocball league last month at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Evenflow is now the king of "Gorilla Games" in the World Organized Rocball Community League after beating Ghasias Brothers in overtime, 109-101, Saturday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The Evenflow-Ghasias Brothers tiff was the second match in the "Gorilla Games," which is a unique side event for the Rocball league and is played every two weeks

"Gorilla" started early this month with league champion Ghasias Brothers earning the right to play in the first game against a picked challenger.

The Okies took the challenge, but came short losing to the Brothers in double overtime, 84-108.

The victory allowed Ghasias Brothers to keep the "Gorilla," win the $50 cash prize for the day, and meet the next challenger.

The second game in the "Gorilla" went into overtime, but this time Ghasias Brothers were on the losing end.

Thanks to Mariano Lisua, who canned a goal off a serve giving Evenflow a 10-2 victory in the first set o-kon.

The Evenflow-Ghasias Brothers match went into overtime after the regulation ended at 99-all.

With neither team having the lead after

See EVENFLO on Page 26

RBC Rollers' James Camacho pulls off for a jumper and is fouled by a Shooters' defender during their game in the Navy Hill caging Sunday night at the Garapan Basketball Court.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Zapanta starts year with a bang

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Raphael Zapanta picked up where he left off, winning the January roll-off for the Bing Energy Drink Prince/Princess of the Lanes competition Sunday at the Saipan Bowling Center.

Zapanta prevailed in the last three monthly roll-offs of 2008 en route to winning nine of the 12 monthly plums last season.

At the start of the 2009 season, Zapanta was still in top form besting seven other youth bowlers in the inaugural roll-off of the year.

The Saipan Southern High School student totaled 700 pinfalls in the four-game roll-off for a 97-pin lead over second placer Leeanne Yarobwemal (603).

Zapanta knocked 145 pins down in Games 1 and 2, improved his perfor-

See ZAPANTA on Page 26

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Janauary Bring Prince of the Lanes winner Raphael Zapanta is flanked by third placer Marion McKenzie, left, and runner-up Leeanne Yarobwemal.

Rollers gain solo lead in Navy Hill caging

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

RBC Rollers cruised to their fourth win in as many games to take the solo lead in the team standings in the 2008 Navy Hill Friendship Basketball League.

RBC Rollers outgunned the San Antonio Shooters, 81-66, to lead three other teams in the winners' list of the weekend games at the Garapan Basketball Court.

Despite a depleted lineup, RBC Rollers managed to control the game early. They started the game with only five players before Jojo Ulloa joined the team midway in the first period, which ended with Rollers ahead, 23-12.

RBC Rollers' lead ballooned to double digits at halftime, 35-21, as they held the Shooters to only nine points in the second period.

The Shooters never recovered their form from thereon absorbing their second loss in as many games.

See ROLLERS on Page 26

P&S notches fifth win in men's softball

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Procurement & Supply took out what's left on its stock in the last two innings en route to a 14-7 victory over Public School System in the men's division of the 2008 Inter Government/Business Softball League Friday at the Capital Hill Ballfield.

P&S scored seven runs in the sixth and seventh inning turning a 7-6 lead to a seven-run victory,

See P&S on Page 26